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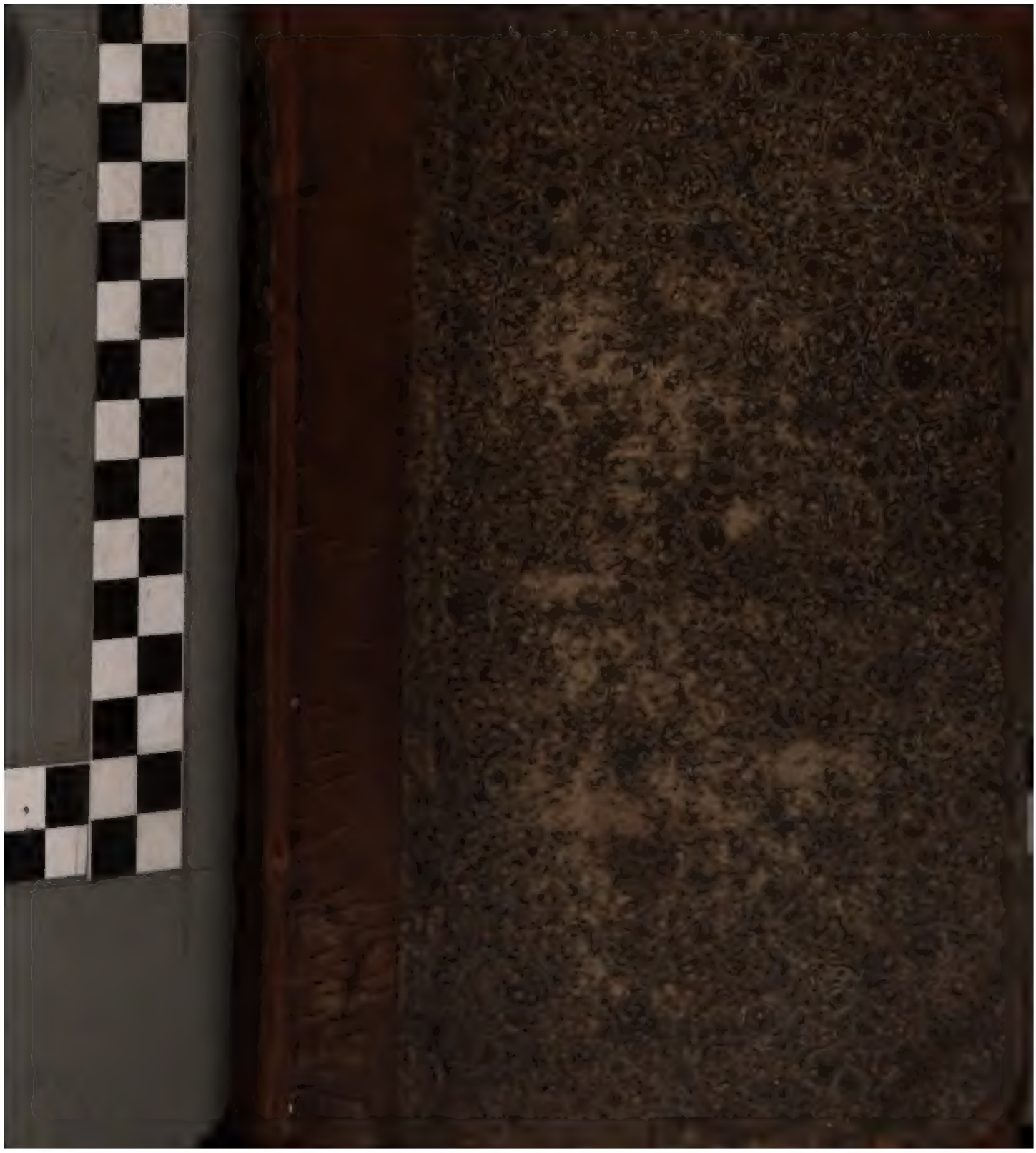

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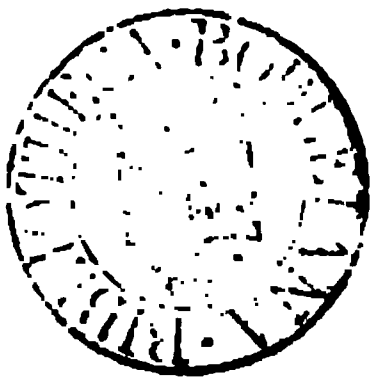

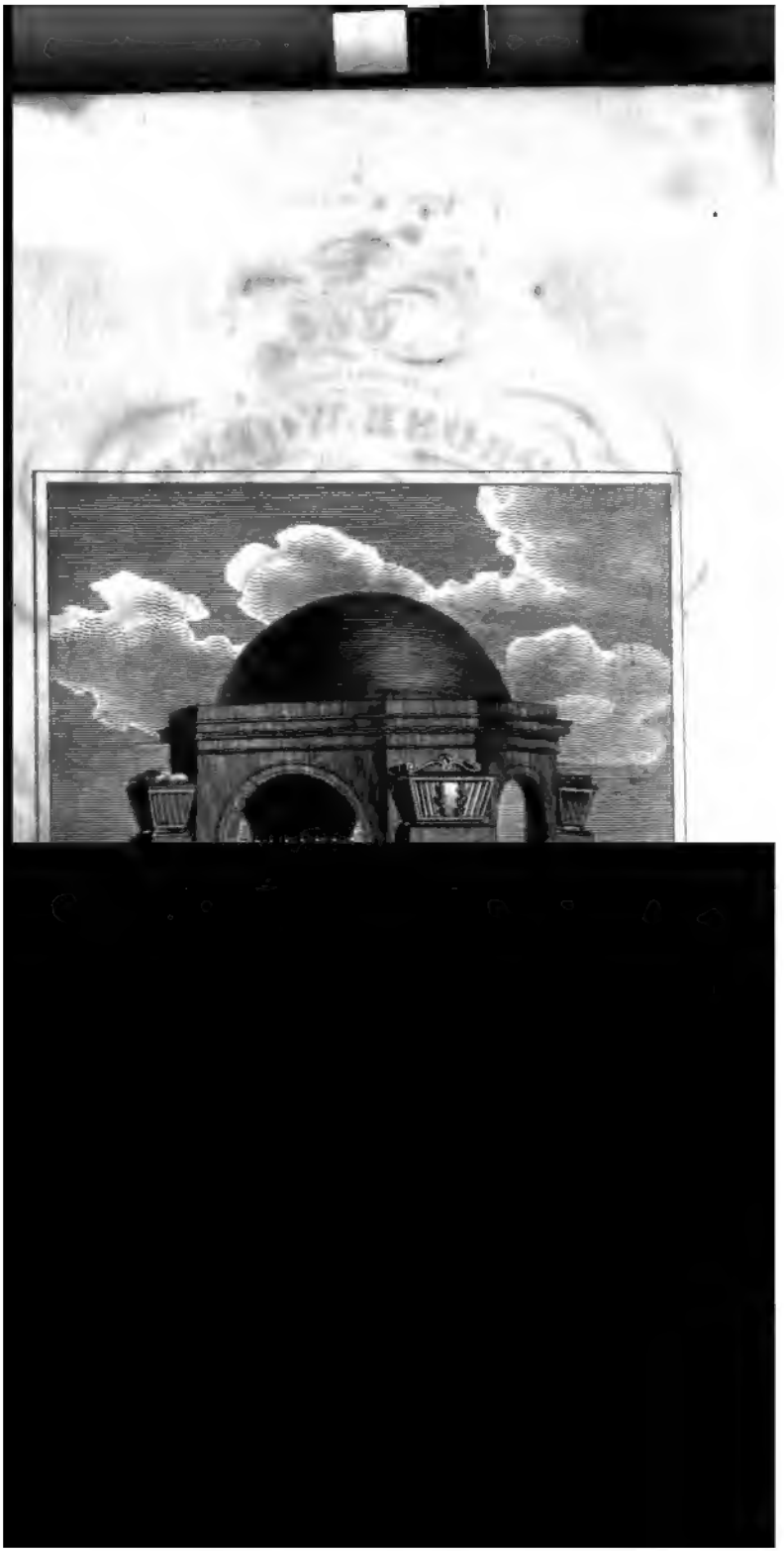

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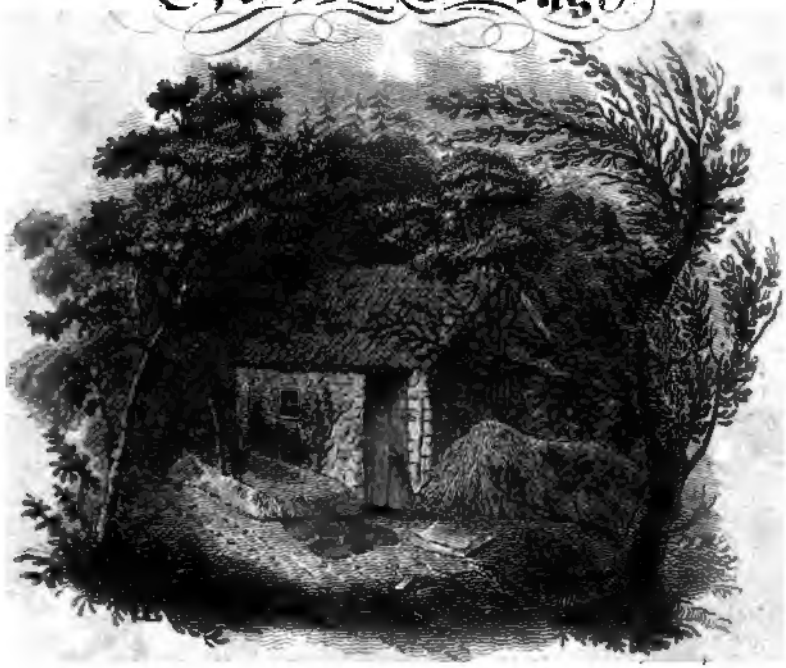

FRIARS-CARSE HERMITAGE.

NEWCASTLE:

Printed & Published by Mackenzie and Dent.

THE

PROSE WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS;

CONTAINING HIS

LETTERS AND CORRESPONDENCE,

LITERARY AND CRITICAL;

AND

AMATORY EPISTLES,

INCLUDING

LETTERS TO CLARINDA,

&c. &c.

EMBELLISHED WITH

NINE BEAUTIFUL AND HIGHLY FINISHED ENGRAVINGS.

Newcastle upon Tyne:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY MACKENZIE AND DENT,
ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH-YARD.

1819.

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LETTERS,

&c. &c.

No. 1.

TO A FEMALE FRIEND.

Written about the year 1780.

I VERILY believe, my dear E. that the pure genuine feelings of love, are as rare in the world as the pure genuine principles of virtue and piety. This I hope will account for the uncommon style of all my letters to you. By uncommon, I mean their being written in such a serious manner, which, to tell you the truth, has made me often afraid lest you should take me for some zealous bigot, who conversed with his mistress as he would converse with his minister. I don't know how it is, my dear; for though, except your company, there is nothing on earth gives me so much pleasure as writing to you, yet it never gives me those giddy raptures so much talked of among lovers. I have often thought that if a well-grounded affection be not really a part of virtue, 'tis something extremely akin to

it. Whenever the thoughts of my E. warms my heart, every feeling of humanity, every principle of generosity, kindles in my breast. It extinguishes every dirty spark of malice and envy, which are but too apt to infest me. I grasp every creature in the arms of universal benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and sympathize with the miseries of the unfortunate. I assure you, my dear, I often look up to the divine disposer of events, with an eye of gratitude for the blessing which I hope he intends to bestow on me, in bestowing you. I sincerely with that he may bless my endeavours to make your life as comfortable and happy as possible, both in sweetening the rougher parts of my natural temper, and bettering the unkindly circumstances of my fortune. This, my dear, is a

No. 2.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR E.

I DO not remember, in the course of your acquaintance and mine, ever to have heard your opinion on the ordinary way of falling in love, amongst people of our station of life: I do not mean the persons who proceed in the way of bargain, but those whose affection is really placed on the person.

Though I be, as you know very well, but a very awkward lover myself, yet as I have some opportunities of observing the conduct of others who are much better skilled in the affair of courtship than I am, I often think it is owing to lucky chance more than to good management, that there are not more unhappy marriages than usually are.

It is natural for a young fellow to like the acquaintance of the females, and customary for him to keep them company when occasion serves: some one of them is more agreeable to him than the rest; there is something, he knows not what, pleases him, he knows not how, in her company. This I take to be what is called love with the greatest part of us, and I must own, my dear E. it is a hard game such a one as you have to play when you meet with such a lover. You cannot admit but he is sincere, and yet, though you use him ever so favourably, perhaps in a few months, or at farthest a year or two, the same unaccount-

able fancy may make him as distractedly fond of another, whilst you are quite forgot. I am aware that perhaps the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you, you may bid me take my own lesson home, and tell me that the passion I have professed for you is perhaps one of those transient flashes I have been describing; but I hope, my dear E. you will do me the justice to believe me, when I assure you, that the love I have for you is founded on the sacred principles of virtue and honour; and by consequence, so long as you continue possessed of those amiable qualities which first inspired my passion for you, so long must I continue to love you. Believe me, my dear, it is love like this alone which can render the married state happy. People may talk of flames and raptures as long as they please; and a warm fancy,

'O! happy state, when souls each other draw,
'When love is liberty, and nature law.'

I know, were I to speak in such a style to many a girl, who thinks herself possessed of no small share of sense, she would think it ridiculous —but the language of the heart is, my dear E. the only courtship I shall ever use to you.

When I look over what I have written, I am sensible it is vastly different from the ordinary style of courtship—but I shall make no apology—I know your good nature will excuse what your good sense may see amiss.

No. 3.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR E.

I HAVE often thought it a peculiarly unlucky circumstance in love, that though in every other situation in life, telling the truth is not only the safest, but actually by far the easiest way of proceeding; a lover is never under greater difficulty in acting, or more puzzled for expression, than when his passion is sincere, and his intentions are honourable. I do not think that it is very difficult for a person of ordinary capacity to talk of love and fondness, which are not felt, and to make vows of constancy and fidelity, which are never intended to be performed, if he be villain enough to practise such detestable conduct: but

to a man whose heart glows with the principles of integrity and truth; and who sincerely loves a woman of amiable person, uncommon refinement of sentiment, and purity of manners—to such a one, in such circumstances, I can assure you, my dear, from my own feelings at this present moment, courtship is a task indeed. There is such a number of foreboding fears, and distrustful anxieties crowd into my mind when I am in your company, or when I sit down to write to you, that what to speak or what to write I am altogether at a loss.

There is one rule which I have hitherto practised, and which I shall invariably keep with you, and that is, honestly to tell you the plain truth. There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am sur-

haps but very imperfectly) by the rules of honour and virtue, if a heart devoted to love and esteem you, and an earnest endeavour to promote your happiness; if these are qualities you would wish in a friend, in a husband; I hope you shall ever find them in your real friend and sincere lover.

No. 4.

TO THE SAME.

I OUGHT in good manners to have acknowledged the receipt of your letter before this time, but my heart was so shocked with the contents of it, that I can scarcely yet collect my thoughts so as to write to you on the subject. I will not attempt to describe what I felt on receiving your letter. I read it over and over, again and again, and though it was in the politest language of refusal, still it was peremptory; 'you were very sorry you could not make me a return, but you wish me' what without you I never can obtain, 'you wish me all kind of happiness.' It would be weak and unmanly to say that without you I never can be happy; but sure I am, that sharing life with you, would have given it a relish, that, wanting you, I never can taste.

Your uncommon personal advantages, and your superior good sense, do not so much strike me; these possibly in a few instances may be met with in others; but that amiable goodness, that tender feminine softness, that endearing sweetness of dis-

position, with all the charming offspring of a warm feeling heart—these I never again expect to meet with in such a degree in this world. All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond any thing I have ever met with in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not think the world can ever efface. My imagination had fondly flattered itself with a wish, I dare not say it ever reached a hope, that possibly I might one day call you mine. I had formed the most delightful images, and my fancy fondly brooded over them ; but now I am wretched for the loss of what I really had no right to expect. I must now think no more of you as a mistress, still I presume to ask to be admitted as a friend. As such I wish to be allowed to wait on you, and as I expect to remove

No. 5.

TO HIS FATHER.*

Irvine, Dec. 27th, 1781.

HONOURED SIR,

I HAVE purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's-day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast, produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity: but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way, I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long,

* The following letter, addressed to his father, was written at the time when the Author was learning the business of a flax-dresser, six or seven years before his name had been heard of out of his own family. It evinces a dignity of thought and expression, and an elevation of sentiment, far superior to what might be expected from one in his humble station.

perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you, I am heartily tired of it, and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

> 'The soul uneasy and confined at home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come.'

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations,* than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable

dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and, with wishing you a merry New-year's day, I shall conclude.

I am, honoured Sir,
Your dutiful son,
ROBERT BURNS.

No. 6.

TO MR. JOHN MURDOCH, SCHOOLMASTER,

STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

Lochlee, 15th January, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

AS I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expence, which any production of mine would but ill repay; I embrace it with pleasure to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits; and in this respect, I hope, my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would

have thought that, bred as I have been, under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing active fellow; but to tell you the truth, sir, there is hardly any thing more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world, to see, and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be any thing original about him, which shews me human nature in a different light from any thing I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to 'study men, their manners, and their ways;' and for this darling subject, I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to any thing further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched, does not much terrify me: I know that even then, my talent for, what country folks call 'a sensible crack,' when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then—I would learn to be happy.* However, I am under no apprehensions about that, for though indolent, yet so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy; and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist; not, indeed, for the sake of the money; but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach; and I scorn to fear the face

* The last shift alluded to here, must be the condition of an itinerant beggar.

of any man living: above every thing, I abhor as hell, the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as *Shenstone*, particularly his *Elegies*; *Thomson*; *Man of Feeling*, a book I prize next to the Bible; *Man of the World*; *Sterne*, especially his *Sentimental Journey*; *M'Pherson's Ossian*, &c.: these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct; and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the whole human race—he 'who can soar above this little scene of things'—can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves! O how the glorious triumphs swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of Mankind, and 'catching the manners living as they rise,' whilst the men of business jostle me on every side, as an idle incumbrance in their way.—But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere common-place story; but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare; and accept of the same for yourself, from,

Dear Sir, yours, &c.

No. 7.

The following is taken from the Manuscript prose presented by our Bard to Mr. Riddel.

ON rummaging over some old papers I lighted on a MS. of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out; as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would have been nonsense. I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope, that some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It sets off thus:

'There are numbers in the world, who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print.' *Shenstone.*

'Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil or our pen design'd!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind.'

Shenstone.

April, 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into; still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed on it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen, in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

.....

August.

There is certainly some connexion between love, and music, and poetry; and therefore, I have always thought a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love composition,

'As toward her cot he jogg'd along
Her name was frequent in his song.'

For my own part, I never had the least thought or inclination of turning Poet, till I got once heartily in love: and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart.

.....

September.

I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher, Mr. Smith, in his excellent *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well under those calamities, in the procurement of which, we ourselves have had no hand; but when

There's not a keener lash!
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down its agonizing throbs;
And after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O, happy! happy! enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

.....

March, 1784.

I have often observed, in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him: though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution, inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be, with strict justice, called *wicked*. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation: and what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest; how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all; I say any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind, commonly known by the ordi-

nary phrase of *blackguards*; sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character: those who by thoughtless prodigality, or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin.—Though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes 'stained with guilt, * * * * * * * * *;' I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty.

.....

April.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal; I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment which are, in a manner, *peculiar* to myself; or

hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him*, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard 'walks on the wings of the wind.' In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following,

The wintry west extends his blast, &c.

See Poems, p. 140.

....

Shenstone finally observes, that love-verses writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery and conceit, from real passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was, at the time, genuine from the heart.

Behind yon hills, &c. *See Poems, p.* 372.

.....

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided into two grand classes, which I shall call the *grave*, and the *merry*;

though, by the bye, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. The grave I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The merry, are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads who have too much fire and spirit, to have any settled rule of action; but without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent, in particular *he*, who with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life, generally indeed in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity, are only evils to him who can sit gravely down, and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others;

and honours; and I do not see but that he may gain Heaven as well, (which by the bye is no mean consideration) who steals through the vale of life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way: as he who straining straight forward, and perhaps bespattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see, and be seen a little more conspicuously, than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term, the poor, indolent devil he has left behind him.

.....

There is a noble sublimity, a heart melting tenderness in some of our ancient ballads, which shew them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius; yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now 'buried among the wreck of things which were.'

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly, and describe so well; the last, the meanest of the muse's train—one who though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory. Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in

love: he, too, has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worst of all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy, could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest, which this world gives to the heart, tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

.....

This is all, worth quoting, in my MSS. and more than all. R. B.

No. 8.

for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition till I grow richer! an epocha, which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely any thing hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to shew my gratitude to Mr. Ballantine, by publishing my poem of *The Brigs of Ayr*. I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable in a very long life of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy, with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations: but, I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection; but sheerly the instinctive emotion of a heart, too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of

the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it.

* * * * * * *

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment, which strikes home to my very soul: though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet, I think, I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence; if so then, how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? O, thou great unknown power! Thou almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me! * * * * *

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power, in that way, to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail farther misery—

* * * * * * * *

To tell the truth, I have little reason for this last complaint; as the world in general has been kind to me fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining, distrustful, snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners, (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast;) still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be *done*. When all my school-fellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted, who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the *hallachores* of the human race) were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent, in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was 'standing idle in the market place,' or only left the chace of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt from whim to whim.

* * * * * * *

You see, Sir, that if to *know* one's errors were a probability of *mending* them, I stand a fair chance: but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it.*

* * * * * * * *

* This letter was evidently written under the distress of mind occasioned by our poet's separation from Mrs. Burns.

No. 9.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

Ayrshire, 1786.

MADAM,

I AM truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honoured with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the sons of Parnassus, nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of a poor bard dances with rapture, when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be

days I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur—

'Syne to the Leglen-wood, when it was late,
'To make a silent and a safe retreat.'

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen-wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and, as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymer) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.

No. 10.

TO MRS. STEWART, OF STAIR.

1786.

MADAM,

THE hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promise so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs, &c, which never made their appearance, except to a friend or two at most. Perhaps some of them may be no great entertainment to you, but of that I am far from being an adequate judge. The song, to the tune of *Ettrick*

banks, you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript. I think, myself, it has some merit; both, as a tolerable description of one of nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening; and one of the finest pieces of nature's workmanship, the finest indeed we know any thing of, an amiable, beautiful young woman; but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, Madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description.

with every look the height of their elevation, but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs. Stewart of Stair.*

No. 11.

DR. BLACKLOCK TO THE REV. G. LAWRIE.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I OUGHT to have acknowledged your favour long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and, perhaps, one of the most genuine entertainments, of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of nature's force and beneficence, exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me.—there is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems; a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse: but whether from declining life or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at

* The song inclosed is 'The lass of Ballochmyle.'—See poems, p. 498.

present out of my power to accomplish that agreeable intention.

Mr. Stewart, professor of morals in this university, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers; but whether this was done or not I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr. Blair, but will take care to have the poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman, to whom I shewed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were therefore much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that

No. 12.

FROM SIR JOHN WHITEFORD.

Edinburgh, 4th December, 1786.

SIR,

I RECEIVED your letter a few days ago. I do not pretend to much interest, but what I have I shall be ready to exert in procuring the attainment of any object you have in view. Your character as a man, (forgive my reversing your order) as well as a poet, entitle you, I think, to the assistance of every inhabitant of Ayrshire. I have been told you wished to be made a gauger; I submit it to your consideration, whether it would not be more desirable, if a sum could be raised by subscription for a second edition of your poems, to lay it out in the stocking of a small farm. I am persuaded it would be a line of life much more agreeable to your feelings, and in the end more satisfactory. When you have considered this, let me know, and whatever you determine upon, I will endeavour to promote as far as my abilities will permit. With compliments to my friend, the doctor,

I am, your friend and well wisher,

JOHN WHITEFORD.

P. S. I shall take it as a favour when you at any time send me a new production.

No. 13.

FROM —— ——.

22d December, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I LAST week received a letter from Dr Blacklock, in which he expresses a desire of seeing you. I write this to you that you may lose no time in waiting upon him, should you not yet have seen him.

* * * * * * * *

I rejoice to hear, from all corners, of your rising fame, and I wish and expect it may tower still higher by the new publication. But, as a friend, I warn you to prepare to meet with your share of detraction and envy—a train, that always accompany great men. For your comfort I am in great hopes that the number of your friends and admirers will increase, and that you have some chance of ministerial, or even * * * * patronage. Now, my friend, such rapid success is very uncommon, and do you think yourself in no danger of suffering by applause and a full purse? Remember Solomon's advice, which he spoke from experience, 'stronger is he that conquers,' &c. Keep fast hold of your rural simplicity and purity, like Telemachus, by Mentor's aid in Calypso's isle, or even in that of Cyprus. I hope *you* have also Minerva with you. I need not tell you how much a modest diffidence and invincible temperance adorn the most shining talents, and elevate

the mind, and exalt and refine the imagination even of a poet.

I hope you will not imagine I speak from suspicion or evil report. I assure you I speak from love and good report, and good opinion, and a strong desire to see you shine as much in the sunshine as you have done in the shade; and in the practice as you do in the theory of virtue. This is my prayer in return for your elegant composition in verse. All here join in compliments and good wishes for your further prosperity.

No. 14.

TO MR. CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, 27th December, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CONFESS I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness, ingratitude to friendship, in not writing you sooner; but of all men living I had intended to send you an entertaining letter, and by all the plodding, stupid, powers, that in nodding, conceited, majesty, preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily-solemn oath this! I am, and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humour as to write a commentary on the *Revelations*.

* * * * * * * *

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I inclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck. One blank in the address to Edinburgh, 'Fair B——' is the heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been any thing nearly like her, in all the combination of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

I have sent you a parcel of subscription-bills, and have written to Mr. Ballantine and Mr. Aiken to call on you for some of them, if they want them. My direction is, care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge-street.

veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently, than mine, to be distinguished: though till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy then to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr. Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your lordship. Your munificence, my lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgments; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude I hope I am incapable of; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have as much honest pride as to detest.

No. 16.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 15th January, 1787.

MADAM,

YOURS of the 9th current, which I am this moment honoured with, is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib—I wished to have written to Dr. Moore before I wrote to you; but, though every day since I received yours of Dec. 30th, the idea, the wish, to

write to him, has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of 'the sons of little men.' To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have; and to write the author of *The View of Society and Manners*, a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him to-morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of lord Eglinton, with ten guineas, by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your in-

stanzas are a part, as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the *Saviour of his Country*, which sooner or later I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet: alas, Madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserved some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity, and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you, I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height, where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede perhaps as far below the mark of truth.

* * * * * * * * *

Your patronising me and interesting yourself in my fame and character as a poet, I rejoice in; it exalts me in my own idea; and whether you can or cannot aid me in my subscription is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription-bill any charms to the

heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace.

No. 17.

TO DR. MOORE.

1787.

SIR,

MRS. DUNLOP has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honour of noticing him and his works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solicitudes of authorship can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such

ners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had: and in a language where Pope and Churchhill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttleton and Collins described the heart, I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame.

No. 18.

FROM DR. MOORE.

Clifford-street, January 23d, 1787.

SIR,

I HAVE just received your letter, by which I find I have reason to complain of my friend Mrs. Dunlop, for transmitting to you extracts from my letters to her, by much too freely and too carelessly written for your perusal. I must forgive her, however, in consideration of her good intention, as you will forgive me, I hope, for the freedom I use with certain expressions, in consideration of my admiration of the poems in general. If I may judge of the author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the *irritable* temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their own number, whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease

and *curious felicity* of expression. Indeed the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scattered, are not all I admire in your works; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favourable impression of the poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would have been my seeing the author, last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years.

I rejoice very sincerely at the encouragement you receive at Edinburgh, and I think you peculiarly fortunate in the patronage of Dr. Blair, who I am informed interests himself very much for you. I beg to be remembered to him; nobody

ance are already among them. I have only to add, that with every sentiment of esteem, and the most cordial good wishes,

I am,

Your obedient humble servant,

J. MOORE.

No. 19.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 15th February, 1787.

REVEREND SIR,

PARDON my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honour you have done me, in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast any thing higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment; but

Ah, like that lonely flower the poet rose!
'Mid penury's bare soil and bitter gale!
He felt each storm that on the mountain blows,
Nor ever knew the shelter of the vale.
By genius in her native vigour nurst,
On nature with impassion'd look he gazed;
Then through the cloud of adverse fortune burst,
Indignant, and in light unborrow'd blazed.
Scotia! from rude affliction shield thy bard,
His heaven-taught numbers Fame herself will guard.

genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss W. has done me, please, Sir, return her in my name my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore; there are I think two characteristic features in her poety—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, *sombre* tenderness of 'time settled sorrow.'

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why.

No. 20.

FROM DR. MOORE.

Clifford-street, 28th February, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter of the 15th, gave me a great deal of pleasure. It is not surprising that you improve in correctness and taste, considering where you have been for some time past.—And I dare swear there is no danger of your admitting any polish which might weaken the vigour of your native powers.

I am glad to perceive that you disdain the nauseous affectation of decrying your own merit as a poet, an affectation which is displayed with most ostentation by those who have the greatest share of self-conceit, and which only adds undeceiving falsehood to disgusting vanity. For you to deny the merit of your poems would be arraigning the fixed opinion of the public.

As the new edition of my *View of Society* is not yet ready, I have sent you the former edition, which I beg you will accept as a small mark of my esteem. It is sent by sea to the care of Mr. Creech, and along with these four volumes for yourself. I have also sent my *Medical Sketches* in one volume, for my friend Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop: this you will be so obliging as to transmit, or if you chance to pass soon by Dunlop, to give it to her.

I am happy to hear that your subscription is so ample, and shall rejoice at every piece of good fortune that befalls you. For you are a very great favourite in my family; and this is a higher compliment than perhaps you are aware of. It includes almost all the professions, and of course is a proof that your writings are adapted to various tastes and situations. My youngest son, who is at Winchester school, writes to me, that he is translating some stanzas of your *Hallow E'en* into Latin verse, for the benefit of his comrades. This union of taste partly proceeds, no doubt, from the cement of Scottish partiality, with which they are all somewhat tinctured. Even *your translator*, who left Scotland too early in life for recollection, is not without it.

* * * * * * * *

I remain with great sincerity,
Your obedient servant,
J. MOORE.

No. 21.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

Edinburgh, 1787.

MY LORD,

I WANTED to purchase a profile of your lordship, which I was told was to be got in town; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a 'human face divine,'

The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with any thing of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, there is my noble patron, my generous benefactor. Allow me, my lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your lordship by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition.* I owe much to your lordship; and what has not in some other instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your lordship's, than which I can say nothing more; and I would not be beholden to favours that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much favoured sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me then, my lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic

* It does not appear that the earl granted this request, nor have the verses alluded to been found among the manuscripts.

merit, to tell the world how much I have the honour to be,

Your lordship's highly indebted,
And ever grateful, humble servant.

No. 22.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

My Lord,

THE honour your lordship has done me, by your notice and advice, in yours of the 1st, instant, I shall ever gratefully remember.

'Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast

This, my lord, is unanswerable. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic muse in my wonted way at the plough-tail.—Still, my lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons, who have honoured me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times draw forth the swelling tear.

Ext. *Property in favour of Mr. Robert Burns to erect and keep up a Headstone, in memory of Poet Ferguson*, 1787.

.....

Session-house, within the Kirk of Cannongate, the twenty second day of February, one thousand seven hundred eighty seven years.

Sederunt of the Managers of the Kirk and Kirk Yard funds of Cannongate.

WHICH day, the treasurer to the said funds produced a letter from Mr. Robert Burns, of date the sixth current, which was read and appointed to be engrossed in their sederunt book, and of which letter the tenor follows.—'To the honourable bailies of Cannongate, Edinburgh. Gentlemen, I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Ferguson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your

church-yard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

'Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the 'narrow house' of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Ferguson's memory; a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying.

'I petition you then, gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your very humble servant, *(sic subscribiter)*

ROBERT BURNS.'

Thereafter the said managers, in consideration of the laudable and disinterested motion of Mr.

No. 24.

TO ——

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish, ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say, thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By the bye, there is nothing in the whole frame of man, which seems to me so unaccountable as that thing called conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun: and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts conscience and harrows us with the feelings of the d*****.

I have inclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that if they merit a place in your truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr. Sprott sent it me.

The Inscription on the stone is as follows:

HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSON, POET.

Born September 5th, 1751—Died 16th October, 1774.

No sculptur'd marble here, nor pompous lay,
'No storied urn, nor animated bust,'
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way
To pour her sorrows o'er her Poet's dust.

On the other side of the stone is as follows:

'By special grant of the managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Ferguson.'

It is I believe upon poor Butler's tomb that this is written. But how many brothers of Parnassus, as well as poor Butler and poor Ferguson, have asked for bread, and been served with the same sauce.

The magistrates *gave you liberty*, did they; Oh, generous magistrates! * * * * * * * celebrated over the three kingdoms for his public spirit, gives a poor poet liberty to raise a tomb to a poor poet's memory! most generous! * * * * * * * once upon a time gave that same poet the mighty sum of eighteen pence for a copy of his works. But then it must be considered that the poet was at this time absolutely starving, and besought his aid with all the earnestness of hunger. And over and above he received a * * * * * * * * worth at least one third of the value, in exchange, but which I believe the poet afterwards very ungratefully expunged.

Next week I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Edinburgh, and, as my stay will be for eight or ten days, I wish you or * * * * * would take a snug well aired bed-room for me, where I may have the pleasure of seeing you over a morning cup of tea. But by all accounts it will be a matter of some difficulty to see you at all, unless your company is bespoke a week before hand. There is a great rumour here concerning your great intimacy with the Duchess of ———, and other ladies of distinction. I am really told that 'cards to invite fly by thousands each night;' and if you had one, I suppose there would also be 'bribes to your old secretary.' It seems you are resolved to make hay while the sun shines, and

avoid if possible the fate of poor Ferguson, * * * * * * * * * * * * * *Quærenda pecunia primum est, virtus post nummos*, is a good maxim to thrive by: you seemed to despise it while in this country, but probably some philosopher in Edinburgh has taught you better sense.

Pray are you yet engraving as well as printing?—are you yet seized

'With itch of picture in the front,
'With bays and wicked rhyme upon't?'

But I must give up this trifling and attend to matters that more concern myself; so as the Aberdeen wit say, *Adieu dryly, we sal drink phan we meet.**

reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures: his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects; there I can give you no light. It is all

'Dark as was Chaos ere the infant sun
'Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams
'Athwart the gloom profound.'

The appellation of a Scottish bard, is by far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts: I have dallied long enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for; and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable; nay shining

abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character; but where God and nature have entrusted the welfare of others to his care; where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connections will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry: being bred to labour secures me independence, and the muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me

No. 27.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, 15th April, 1787.

MADAM,

THERE is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broken open your letters, but

'Rude am I in speech,
'And therefore little can I grace my cause
'In speaking for myself—'

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart, and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest, sense of your goodness.

I come abroad, in print, for certain, on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only by the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for Dr. Moore's and Miss W.'s copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place, but that we can settle when I have the honour of waiting on you.

Dr. Smith* was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him.

* Dr. Adam Smith.

No. 28.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 23d April, 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs Dunlop. I am ill skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, sir, for the honour you have done me; and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book is what I have in common with the world; but to regard these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more

I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind.

No. 29.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 30th April, 1787.

——YOUR criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better, You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being, either in prose or in verse.

I set as little by *****, lords, clergy, critics, &c. as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world, by the bye; illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, madam, that some of my own favourite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my Dream, which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in four weeks, or less, to have the honour of appearing at Dunlop, in its defence, in person.

No. 30.

EXTRACTS.*

Edinburgh, April 9th, 1787.

AS I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new, to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr. Palgrave, that 'half a word fixed, upon or near the spot, is worth a cart load of recollection.' I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks, is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh

cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confidant. I will sketch every character that any way strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law phrase, *without feud or favour*.—Where I hit on any thing clever, my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security, at least equal, to the bosom of any friend whatever.

My own private story likewise, my love-adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted.—In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up to sale.

To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exception—the connection between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.

There, confidence, confidence that exalts thei the more in one another's opinion, that endea them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedl 'reigns and revels.' But this is not my lot, an in my situation, if I am wise, (which by the by I have no great chance of being), my fate shoul be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow, 'to wate alone on the house tops.'—Oh, the pity!

* * * * * *

There are few of the sore evils under the su give me more uneasiness and chagrin, than th comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowe worth, is received every where, with the receptio which a mere ordinary character, decorated wit the trappings and futile distinctions of fortun meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his brea

dunderpate, and myself) that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the thoes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

With —— I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*.—When he neglects me for the mere carcase of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, What do I care for him, or his pomp either?

* * * * * * *

Saturday, May 6th. Left Edinburgh—Lammer-muir-hills, miserably dreary in general, but at times very picturesque.

Lanson-edge, a glorious view of the Merse. Reach Berrywell. * * * The family-meeting with my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister. * * *

Sunday. Went to church at Dunse.—Heard Dr. Bowmaker. * * *

Monday. Coldstream—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge—dine at Coldstream, with Mr. Ainslie, and Mr. Foreman. Beat Mr. Foreman in a dispute about Voltaire.

Drink tea at Lenel-House, with Mr. and Mrs. Brydone, * * * Reception extremely flattering. Sleep at Coldstream.

Tuesday. Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of the town—fine bridge over the Tweed. Enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, especially on the Scotch side. * * * Visit Roxburgh Palace—fine situation of it. Ruins of Roxburgh Castle—a holly bush growing where James the second was accidently killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin, and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by a Hottentot, a *maitre d'hotel* of the Duke's!—Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads—turnip and sheep-husbandry, their great improvements. * * * Low markets, consequently low lands—magnificence of farmers and farm-houses. Come up the Tiviot, and up the Jed to Jedburgh to lie, and so wish myself good night.

Wednesday. Breakfast with Mr. Fair. * * * Charming romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens and orchards, intermingled among the houses, and the ruins of a once magnificent cathedral. All the towns here have the appearance of old rude grandeur, but extremely idle—Jed a fine romantic little river. Dined with Capt. Rutherford, * * * return to Jedburgh. Walk up the Jed with some ladies to be shewn Love-lane, and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr. Potts, writer, and to Mr. Sommerville, the clergyman of the parish, a man and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning.

* * * * * * *

Jedburgh, Saturday. Was presented by the magistrates with the freedom of the town.

Took farewell of Jedburgh with some melancholy sensations.

Monday, May 14th, -Kelso. Dine with the farmer's club—all gentlemen talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from 30l. to 50l. value, and attends the fox-hunting club in the country. Go out with Mr. Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, to sleep. In his mind and manners, Mr. Ker is astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir—Every thing in his house elegant. He offers to accompany me in my English tour,

Tuesday. Dine with Sir Alexander Don; a very wet day. * * * Sleep at Mr. Ker's again, and set out next day for Melross—visit Dryburgh, a fine old ruined abbey by the way. Cross the Leader and come up the Tweed to Melross. Dine there, and visit that far-famed glorious ruin —Come to Selkirk up the banks of Ettrick. The whole country hereabouts, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stoney.*

* The intentions of the poet in procuring this book, were very imperfectly executed. He has inserted in it few or no incidents, but several observations and reflections, of which the greater part that are proper for the public eye, will be found interwoven in his Letters. The most curious particulars in the book are the delineations of the characters he met with.—These are not numerous; but they are chiefly of persons of distinction in the republic of letters, and nothing but the delicacy and respect due to living characters, prevents us from committing them to the press. Though it appears that in his conversation he was sometimes disposed to sarcastic remarks on the men with whom he lived, nothing of this kind is discoverable in these more de-

No. 31.

TO THE REV. DR. HUGH BLAIR.

Lawn-market, Edinburgh, 3d May, 1787.

REV. AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR,

I LEAVE Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship, you have shewn me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark; and honoured by the

I have sent you a proof impression of Beugós work for me, done on Indian paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c.

No. 32.

FROM DR. BLAIR.

Argyle-square, Edinburgh, 4th May, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS favoured this forenoon with your very obliging letter, together with an impression of your portrait, for which I return you my best thanks. The success you have met with I do not think was beyond your merits; and if I have had any small hand in contributing to it, it gives me great pleasure. I know no way in which literary persons who are advanced in years can do more service to the world, than in forwarding the efforts of rising genius, or bringing forth unknown merit from obscurity. I was the first person who brought out to the notice of the world the poems of Ossian; first, by the *Fragments of ancient Poetry,* which I published, and afterwards, by my setting on foot the undertaking for collecting and publishing the *Works of Ossian;* and I have always considered this as a meritorious action of my life.

Your situation, as you say, was indeed very singular; and in being brought out all at once from

the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well; and, as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour.

You are now I presume to retire to a more private walk of life; and I trust will conduct yourself there with industry, prudence and honour. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments, which your situation will render proper, you will not I hope neglect to promote that esteem, by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it as may raise your character still higher. At the same time be not in too great a haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents. For on any second production you give the world, your fate, as a poet, will very much depend. There is no doubt a gloss of novelty, which time wears off. As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprized, if in your rural retreat you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet without being somewhat of a philosopher. He must lay his account, that any one, who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise. He will be inclined sometimes to court retreat, and to disappear from public view. He will not affect to shine always; that he may at proper seasons come forth with more ad-

vantage and energy. He will not think himself neglected if he be not always praised. I have taken the liberty you see of an old man to give advice and make reflections, which your own good sense will I dare say render unnecessary.

As you mention your being just about to leave town, you are going, I should suppose, to Dumfriesshire to look at some of Mr. Miller's farms. I heartily wish the offers to be made you there may answer; as I am persuaded you will not easily find a more generous and better hearted proprietor to live under than Mr. Miller. When you return, if you come this way, I will be happy to see you, and to know concerning your future plans of life. You will find me by the 22d of this month, not in my house in Argyle-square, but at a country house at Restalrig, about a mile east from Edinburgh, near the Musselburgh road. Wishing you all success and prosperity, I am, with real regard and esteem,

Dear Sir, Yours sincerely,

HUGH BLAIR.

No. 33.

FROM DR. MOORE.

Clifford-Street, May 53d, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I HAD the pleasure of your letter by Mr. Creech, and soon after he sent me the new edition of your poems. You seem to think it in-.

cumbent on you to send to each subscriber a number of copies proportionate to his subscription money, but you may depend upon it, few subscribers expect more than one copy, whatever they subscribed; I must inform you however that I took twelve copies for those subscribers, for whose money you were so accurate as to send me a receipt, and Lord Eglintoun told me he had sent for six copies for himself, as he wished to give five of them in presents.

Some of the poems you have added in this last edition are very beautiful, particularly the *Winter Night*, the *Address to Edinburgh*, *Green grow the Rashes*, and the two songs immediately following: the latter of which is exquisite. By the way, I imagine, you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge.

upon some proper subject, and arrange the plan in your mind, without beginning to execute any part of it till you have studied most of the best English poets, and read a little more of history.—The Greek and Roman stories you can read in some abridgement, and soon become master of the most brilliant facts, which must highly delight a poetical mind. You *should* also, and very soon *may*, become master of the heathen mythology, to which there are everlasting allusions in all the poets, and which in itself is charmingly fanciful. What will require to be studied with more attention, is modern history; that is the history of France and Great Britain, from the beginning of Henry the seventh's reign. I know very well you have a mind capable of attaining knowledge by a shorter process than is commonly used, and I am certain you are capable of making a better use of it, when attained, than is generally done.

I beg you will not give yourself the trouble of writing to me when it is *inconvenient*, and make no apology when you do write for having postponed it—be assured of this, however, that I shall always be happy to hear from you. I think my friend Mr. —— told me that you had some poems in manuscript by you, of a satirical and humorous nature, (in which by the way I think you very strong) which your prudent friends prevailed on you to omit; particularly one called *Somebody's Confession*; if you will entrust me with a sight of any of these, I will pawn my word to give no copies, and will be obliged to you for a perusal of them.

I understand you intend to take a farm, and make the useful and respectable business of husbandry your chief occupation; this I hope will not prevent your making occasional addresses to the nine ladies who have shewn you such favour, one of whom visited you in the *auld clay biggin*, Virgil, before you proved to the world that there is nothing in the business of husbandry inimical to poetry; and I sincerely hope that you may afford an example of a good poet being a successful farmer. I fear it will not be in my power to visit Scotland this season: when I do, I'll endeavour to find you out, for I heartily wish to see and converse with you. If ever your occasions call you to this place, I make no doubt of your paying me a visit, and you may depend on a very cordial welcome from this family.

I am, dear Sir,
Your friend and obedient servant,
J. MOORE.

No. 34.

FROM MR. JOHN HUTCHINSON.

Jamaica, St. Annes, 14th June, 1787.

SIR,

I RECEIVED yours, dated Edinburgh, 2d January, 1787, wherein you acquaint me you were engaged with Mr. Douglas, of Port Antonia, for three years, at thirty pounds sterling a year;

and I am happy some unexpected accidents interwened that prevented your sailing with the vessel, s I have great reason to think Mr. Douglas's employ would by no means have answered your expectations. I received a copy of your publications, for which I return you my thanks, and it is my own opinion, as well as that of such of my friends as have seen them, they are most excellent in their kind; although some could have wished they had been in the English style, as they allege the Scottish dialect is now becoming obsolete, and thereby the elegance and beauties of your poems are in a great measure lost to far the greatest part of the community. Nevertheless there is no doubt you had sufficient reasons for your conduct, perhaps the wishes of some of the Scottish nobility and gentry, your patrons, who will always relish their own old country style; and your own inclinations for the same. It is evident from several passages in your works, you are as capable of writing in the English as in the Scottish dialect, and I am in great hopes your genius for poetry, from the specimen you have already given, will turn out both for profit and honour to yourself and country. I can by no means advice you now to think of coming to the West Indies, as, I assure you, there is no encouragement for a man of learning and genius here; and am very confident you can do far better in Great Britain, than in Jamaica. I am glad to hear my friends are well, and shall always be happy to hear from you at all convenient opportunities, wishing you success in all your undertakings. I will esteem it a parti-

cular favour if you will send me a copy of the other edition you are now printing.

I am, with respect,

Dear Sir, yours, &c.

JOHN HUTCHINSON.

No. 35.

AN EXTRACT OF A LETTER,

TO MR. AINSLIE.

Arrachas, near Crochairbas, by Lochleary, June 28th, 1787.

SIR,

I WRITE you this on my tour through

as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country; you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be often at my own expense; for I assure you, Sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of *wisdom*, I sometimes think I resemble: I have, I say, like him *turned my eyes to behold madness and folly*, and like him too, frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. * * * * * *

For the remainder of this letter, which was addressed to Dr. Moore, and which forms one of the most interesting specimens of biographical writing in the English language, we refer the reader to our poet's life prefixed to the preceding volume containing his poetical works.

No. 87.

TO MR. WALKER, BLAIR OF ATHOLE.

Inverness, 5th Dec. 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just time to write the fon
going,* and to tell you that it was (at least mos
part of it) the effusion of an half-hour I spent a
Bruar. I do not mean it was *extempore*, for
have endeavoured to brush it up as well as M
N—'s chat, and the jogging of the chaise woul
allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhym
is the coin with which a poet pays his debts o
honour or gratitude. What I owe to the nobl
family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ev

of conversation—Sir W. M—'s friendship. In short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company raises an honest glow in my bosom.

No. 38.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17th Sept. 1787.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I ARRIVED here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near six hundred miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went thro' the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the duke of Athole; thence cross Tay and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending nearly two days with his grace and family: thence many miles through a wild country, among cliffs grey with eternal snows, and gloomy savage glens, till I crossed Spey and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music; Badenoch, &c. till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I

saw the identical bed, in which tradition says king Duncan was murdered: lastly from Fort George to Inverness.

I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen; thence to Stonehive, where James Burness, from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts Jean and Isabel still alive, and hale old women. John Caird, though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can: they have had several letters from his son in New York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay till I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing: warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his very grave, what cared I for fishing-towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon Castle next day with the duke, duchess, and family.—I am thinking to cause my old mare to meet me, by means of John Ronald, at Glasgow, but you shall hear farther from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty and many compliments from the north to my mother; and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a birth for William, but am not likely to be successful. Farewell.

ABERFELDIE LOWER FALL.

No. 39.

FROM MR. W*****.

Athole House, 13th Sept. 1787.

YOUR letter of the 5th reached me only on the 11th; what awkward route it had taken I know not; but it deprived me of the pleasure of writing to you in the manner you proposed, as you must have left Dundee before a letter could possibly have got there. I hope your disappointment on being forced to leave us was as great as appeared from your expressions. This is the best consolation for the greatness of ours. I still think with vexation on that ill-timed indisposition which lost me a day's enjoyment of a man (I speak without flattery) possessed of those very dispositions and talents I most admire; one * You know how anxious the duke was to have another day of you, and to let Mr. Dundas have the pleasure of your conversation as the best dainty with which he could entertain an honoured guest. You know likewise the eagerness the ladies shewed to detain you; but perhaps you do not know the scheme which they devised, with their usual fertility in resources. One of the servants was sent to your driver, to bribe him to loosen or pull off a shoe from one of his horses, but the ambush failed. *Proh mirum!* The driver was *incorruptible*. Your verses have given much delight, and I think

will produce their proper effect.* They produced a powerful one immediately, for the morning after I read them, we all set out in procession to the Bruar, where none of the ladies had been these seven or eight years, and again enjoyed them there. The passages we most admired are the description of the *dying trouts*. Of the high fall, 'twisting strength' is a happy picture of the upper part. The characters of the birds, 'mild and mellow' is the thrush itself. The benevolent anxiety for their happiness and safety I highly approve. The two stanzas beginning 'Here haply too'—*darkly dashing*, is most descriptively Ossianic.

* * * * * * *

Here I cannot deny myself the pleasure of mentioning an incident which happened yesterday at

A sweet accomplished girl of seventeen in so angelic a situation. Take your pencil and paint her in your most glowing tints. Hold her up amidst the darkness of this scene of human woe, to the icy dames that flaunt through the gaieties of life without ever feeling one generous, one great emotion.

Two days after you left us, I went to Taymouth. It is a charming place, but still I think art has been too busy. Let me be your Cicerone for two days at Dunkeld, and you will acknowledge that in the beauties of naked nature we are not surpassed. The loch, the Gothic arcade, and the fall of the hermitage, gave me most delight. But I think the last has not been taken proper advantage of. The hermitage is too much in the common place style. Every body expects the couch, the book press, and the hairy gown. The duke's idea I think better. A rich and elegant apartment is an excellent contrast to a scene of Alpine horrors.

I must now beg your permission (unless you have some other design) to have your verses printed. They appear to me extremely correct, and some particular stanzas would give universal pleasure. Let me know however if you incline to give them any farther touches.

* * * * * *

Were they in some of the public papers, we could more easily disseminate them among our friends, which many of us are anxious to do.

When you pay your promised visit to the Braes of Ochtertyre, Mr. and Mrs. Graham of Balgowan beg to have the pleasure of conducting

you to the bower of *Bessy Bell and Mary Gray*, which is now in their possession. The duchess would give any consideration for another sight of your letter to Dr. Moore; we must fall upon some method of procuring it for her. I shall enclose this to our mutual friend Dr. B******** who may forward it. I shall be extremely happy to hear from you at your first leisure. Inclose your letter in a cover addressed to the duke of Athole, Dunkeld.

God bless you,
J***** W*****.

No. 40.

FROM MR. JOHN MURDOCH.

London, 28th October, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

AS my friend, Mr. Brown, is going from this place to your neighbourhood, I embrace the opportunity of telling you that I am yet alive, tolerably well, and always in expectation of being better. By the much-valued letters before me, I see that it was my duty to have given you this intelligence about three years and nine months ago; and have nothing to allege as an excuse, but that we poor, busy, bustling bodies in London, are so much taken up with the various pursuits in which we are here engaged, that we seldom think of any person, creature, place, or ing, that is absent. But this is not altogether

the case with me; for I often think of you, and *Hornie*, and *Russel*, and an *unfathomed depth*, and *known brunstane*, all in the same minute, although you and they are (as I suppose) at a considerable distance. I flatter myself, however, with the pleasing thought, that you and I shall meet some time or other, either in Scotland or England. If ever you come hither, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your poems relished by the Caledonians in London, full as much as they can be by those of Edinburgh. We frequently repeat some of your verses in our Caledonian society; and you may believe that I am not a little vain, that I have had some share in cultivating such a genius. I was not absolutely certain that you were the author, till a few days ago, when I made a visit to Mrs. Hill, Dr. M'Comb's eldest daughter, who lives in town, and who told me that she was informed of it by a letter from her sister in Edinburgh, with whom you had been in company when in that capital.

Pray let me know if you have any intention of visiting this huge, overgrown metropolis. It would afford matter for a large poem. Here you would have an opportunity of indulging your vein in the study of mankind, perhaps to a greater degree than in any city upon the face of the globe; for the inhabitants of London, as you know, are a collection of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, who make it, as it were, the centre of their commerce.

* * * * * * *

Present my respectful compliments to Mrs. Burns, to my dear friend Gilbert, and all the rest

of her amiable children. May the Father of the universe bless you all with those principles and dispositions, that the best of parents took such uncommon pains to instil into your minds, from your earliest infancy. May you live as he did: if you do, you can never be unhappy. I feel myself grown serious all at once, and affected in a manner I cannot describe. I shall only add, that it is one of the greatest pleasures I promise myself befor I die, that of seeing the family of a man whose memory I revere more than that of any person that ever I was acquainted with.

I am, my dear friend,

Yours, sincerely,

JOHN MURDOCH.

leave to your imagination to supply. It has powers sufficient to transport you to her side, to recall her accents, and to make them still vibrate in the ears of memory. To her I am indebted for getting the enclosed notes. They are clothed with '*thoughts* that breathe, and *words* that burn.' *These*, however, being in an *unknown* tongue to you, you must again have recourse to that same fertile imagination of yours to interpret them, and suppose a lover's description of the beauties of an adored mistress—Why did I say unknown? The language of love is an universal one, that seems to have escaped the confusion of Babel, and to be understood by all nations.

I rejoice to find that you were pleased with so many things, persons, and places, in your northern tour, because it leads me to hope you may be induced to revisit them again. That the old castle of Kilravock, and its inhabitants, were amongst these, adds to my satisfaction. I am even vain enough to admit your very flattering application of the line of Addison's; at any rate, allow me to believe, that 'friendship will maintain the ground she has occupied in both our hearts,' in spite of absence, and that when we do meet, it will be as acquaintance of a score of year's standing; and on this footing consider me as interested in the future course of your fame, so splendidly commenced. Any communications of the progress of your muse will be received with great gratitude, and the fire of your genius will have power to warm even us, frozen sisters of the north.

The fire-sides of Kilravock and Kildrummie unite in cordial regards to you. When you in-

cline to figure either in your idea, suppose some of us reading your poems, and some of us singing your songs, and my little Hugh looking at your picture, and you'll seldom be wrong. We remember Mr. Nichol with as much good will as we can do any body who hurried Mr. Burns from us.

Farewell, Sir; I can only contribute the *widow's mite* to the esteem and admiration excited by your merits and genius; but this I give, as she did, with all my heart...being sincerely yours,

EL. ROSE.

No. 42.

TO —— DALRYMPLE, ESQ.

with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

* * * * * *

I am naturally of a superstitious cast, and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its consciousness, and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My foreboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility: and several events, great in their magnitude and in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfall of the conclave, or the crushing of the cork rumps; a ducal coronet to lord George G——, and the protestant interest; or Saint Peter's keys, to * * * * * *

You want to know how I came on. I am just in *statu quo*; or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, in 'auld use and wont.' The noble earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent Being whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul, than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let the worshipful squire H. L. or, the reverend Mass J. M. go into their primitive nothing, At best they are but ill digested lumps of chaos, only one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity, and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at 'the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.'

No. 43.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 21st January, 1788.

AFTER six weeks' confinement, I a beginning to walk across the room. They hav been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spiri made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one coul resign life as an officer resigns a commission: f I would not *take in* any poor, ignorant wretc by *selling out.* Lately I was a sixpenny private and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; no I march to the campaign, a starving cadet: a litt more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this: for though I do wa bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, lik some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude cunning as to dissemble or to conceal my cowardic

As soon as I can bear the journey, which wi be, I suppose, about the middle of next week, leave Edinburgh, and soon after I shall pay m grateful duty at Dunlop-house.

No. 44.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, 12th February, 1788.

SOME things in your late letters hurt me: not that *you say them*, but that *you mistake me*. Religion, my honoured madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. I have indeed been the luckless victim of wayward follies; but, alas! I have ever been 'more fool than knave.' A mathematician without religion is a probable character; an irreligious poet is a monster.

* * * * * *

No. 45.

TO THE SAME.

Mossgiel, 7th March, 1788.

MADAM,

THE last paragraph in yours of the 30th February, affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with any little wit I have, I do confess: but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose, to find out when it was employed against

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TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 21st January, 1789.

AFTER six weeks' confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission: for I would not *take in* any poor, ignorant wretch, by *selling out*. Lately I was a sixpenny private; and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign, a starving cadet; a little

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you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm, a great deal worse than I do the devil; at least as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honoured friend, who cannot appear in any light, but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or if you chuse to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem of all; but God help us who are wits or witlings by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported!

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila.* I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honour, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet, of his muse Scotia, from which, by the

No. 46.

TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Mauchline, 31st March, 1788.

YESTERDAY, my dear Sir, as I was riding thro' a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire; it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favourite air, *Capt. Okeon*, coming at length in my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated.*

I am tolerably pleased with these verses, but as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harassed with care and anxiety, about this farming project of mine, that my muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders or followed a tinker.—When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming; at present, the world sits such a load on my mind, that it has effaced almost every trace of the ——— in me.

My very best compliments and good wishes to Mrs. Cleghorn.

* Here the bard gives the first stanza of the *Chevalier's Lament.*

No. 47.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 28th April, 1788.

MADAM,

YOUR powers of represension must
great indeed, as I assure you they made my he
ache with penitential pangs, even though I w
really not guilty. As I commence farmer
Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must
pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got
offer of the excise business without solicitatio
and as it cost me only six months' attendance
instructions, to entitle me to a commission; whi

of bed, with all the miserable effects of a violent cold.

You see, madam, the truth of the French maxim, *Le vrai n'est pas tonjours le vrai-semblable*; your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence, which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life.

* * * * * *

Your books have delighted me; *Virgil*, *Dryden*, and *Tasso*, were all equally strangers to me; but of this more at large in my next.

No. 48.

TO PROFESSOR DUGAL STEWART.

Mauchline, 3d May, 1788.

SIR,

I INCLOSE you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that great unknown Being, who frames the chain of causes and events; prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, Sir, to claim it as my privilege, to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and

the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life.

No. 49.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 4th May, 1788.

MADAM,

DRYDEN'S *Virgil* has delighted me.—

copied, but by no means improved Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing of this owing to the translators; for, from every thing I have seen of Dryden, I think him in genius, and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough to form an opinion: in some future letter you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most.

No. 50.

TO THE SAME.

27th May, 1788.

MADAM,

I HAVE been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which unlike * * * * * * * * * * * has followed me in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret, in the fleeting hours of my late will-o-wisp appearance, that 'here I had no continuing city;' and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendour, put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life, insignificance and poverty.

* * * * * * *

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life, that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honour to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fire side; where the planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who, though in appearance, partakers and equally noble partakers of the same nature with Madame; are from time to time, their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good

No. 51.

TO THE SAME.

AT MR. DUNLOP'S HADDINGTON.

Ellisland, 13th June, 1788.

Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthen'd chain.

Goldsmith.

THIS is the second day, my honoured friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old, smoky *Spence*;* far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except *Jenny Geddes*, the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares, and novel plans, hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, consequently the dreary objects seem larger than life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind.

* The Parlour.

'The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes?' &c.

Your surmise, madam, is just; I am indeed a husband.

* * * * * *

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements, but as I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter; and there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery.

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage, by a more than common handsome figure; these, I think in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page.

mean time, as Sir Roger de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great coats for mourning; so, because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil: nay, 'tis the devil and all. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my appetite at the sight of successful knavery; and sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense of self-important folly.—When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner; the proud man's wine so offends my palate that it choaks me in the gullet; and the *pulvilis'd*, feathered, pert coxcomb, is so disgustful in my nostril that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations, let me prescribe for you patience and a bit of my cheese. I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There in my eye is our friend, Smellie; a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I have ever met with; when you see him, as, alas! he too is smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstances, aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness—a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him, but if you add a tankard of brown stout, and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun.

C——h, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David* with his *Courant* comes, too, across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those —— bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned; so a fresh egg is a very good thing, but when thrown at a man in a pillory it does not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious friend, D——r, I would wish also

the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes which a certain poet gave him one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of law, I shall have nothing to do with them professedly.—The faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their *clients*, that is another thing; God knows they have much to digest!

The clergy, I pass by: their profundity of erudition, and their liberality of sentiment; their total want of pride, and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth, whom I have the honour to call friend, the laird of Craigdarroch; but I have spoken to the landlord of the King's-arms inn here, to have at the next county meeting a large ewe-milk cheese on the table, for the benefit of the Dumfrieshire whigs, to enable them to digest the duke of Queensberry's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage.

No. 53.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 2d August, 1788.

HONOURED MADAM,

YOUR kind letter welcomed me, yesternight, to Ayrshire. I am indeed seriously angry with you at the *quantum* of your *luckpenny;* but vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write you from Nithsdale, and give you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportunity of calling at a post office once in a fort-

You will excuse this quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject farther, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage, belonging to a gentleman in my Nithsdale neighbourhood. They are almost the only favours the muses have conferred on me in that country.*

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following were the production of yesterday, as I jogged through the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intend inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my excise hopes depend, Mr. Graham of Fintry; one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, but I will dare to say it of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts 'unhousel'd, unanointed, unaneal'd.'†

* * * * * * *

Here the muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow! you vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell.

* 'Thou whom chance may hither lead.' See poems, p. 200.

† 'Pity the tuneful Muses' helpless train.' See poems, p, 237.

No. 54.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, 10th August, 1788.

MY MUCH HONOURED FRIEND,

YOURS of the 24th June is before me; I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife, waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, answering

to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my eclatant return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery were in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

* * * * * *

I can easily *fancy* a more agreeable companion for my journey of life, but, upon my honour, I have never *seen* the individual instance.

* * * * * *

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner, for life, who could have entered into my favourite studies, relished my favourite authors, &c. without probably entailing on me, at the same time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the other blessed, boarding school acquirements, which *(pardonnez moi, Madame)* are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be gentry.

* * * * * *

I like your way in your church-yard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, *in progression*, by me, to send you when

the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you, my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind, is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dissocial, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence.

No. 55.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, 16th August, 1788.

I AM in a fine disposition, my honoured friend, to send you an elegiac epistle; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian.

'Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?
Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?'

* * * * * *

My increasing cares in this, as yet, strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children:—I could indulge these reflections, till my humour should ferment into the most acid chagrin, that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down, to write to you; as I declare upon my

soul I always find *that* the most sovereign balm for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr. ——'s to dinner, for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind: from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage, as a professional man, was expected: I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me ye, my adored household gods—Independence of spirit, and Integrity of soul! In the course of conversation, *Johnson's Musical Museum*, a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpischord, beginning,

'Raving winds around her blowing.'*

The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words, 'Mine, madam —they are indeed my very best verses:' she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well, 'king's caff is better than ither folks' corn.' I was going to make a New Testament quotation about 'casting pearls,' but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste.

* * * * * *

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial heaven; whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours, and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose

* See poems, p. 452.

nerves, whose sinews, whose days, are sold to the minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad, called, *The life and age of man*; beginning thus,

'Twas in the sixteenth hunder year
Of God and fifty three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie.'

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years: the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died; during which time, his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The life*

to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear madam, you are now *more* than pleased with the *length* of my letters. I return to Ayrshire, middle of next week: and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest.

No. 56.

TO R. GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

Sir,

WHEN I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakespeare, asks old Kent why he wished to be in his service, he answers, 'Because you have that in your face which I could like to call master.' For some such reason, Sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your board, to be admitted an officer of excise. I have according to form been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his certificate with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fide-

lity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business, except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted.

* * * * * * *

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life, in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to see throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jail; whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, Sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on it; may I therefore beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division, where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation.

No. 57.

TO MR. PETER HILL.

Mauchline, 1st October, 1788.

I HAVE been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the 'Address to Lochlomond,' you were so obliging as to send to me. Were I impannelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my

verdict should be 'Guilty! A poet of nature's making!' It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does; to place some favourite classic author in his own walks of study and composition, before him, as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be, Thomson. Will my brother poet forgive me, if I venture to hint, that his imitation of that immortal bard, is in two or three places rather more servile than such a genius as his required.—e. g.

> To soothe the madding passions all to peace.
>
> *Address.*
>
> To soothe the throbbing passions into peace.
>
> *Thomson.*

I think the *Address* is, in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the *Seasons*. Like Thomson too he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading; in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but like a true poet of nature's making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only, I do not altogether like

> 'Truth,
> The soul of every song that's nobly great.'

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is nobly great. Perhaps I am wrong: this may be but a prose-criticism. Is not the phrase, in *line* 7, *page*

0, 'Great lake,' too much vulgarized by every day language, for so sublime a poem?

'Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,'

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration of a comparison with other lakes, is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader's ideas must sweep the

'Winding margin of an hundred miles.'

The perspective that follows mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digression on the yew-tree—'Benlomond's lofty, cloud-enveloped head,' &c. are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject, which has been often tried, yet our poet, in his grand picture, has interjected a circumstance so far as I know entirely original.

to entertain her 'partial, listening ear,' is a pretty thought. But in my opinion the most beautiful passages in the whole poem, are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Lochlomond's 'hospitable flood;' their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, driving, &c.; and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to any in the *Seasons*. The idea of 'the floating tribes distant seen, far glistering to the moon,' provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. 'The howling winds,' the 'hideous roar' of 'the white cascades,' are all in the same style.

I forget that while I am thus holding forth with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must however mention, that the last verse of the sixteenth page is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must likewise notice that beautiful paragraph, beginning, 'The gleaming lake,' &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the two last paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began—I should like to know who the author is; but, whoever he be, please present him with my grateful thanks for the entertainment he has afforded me.

A friend of mine desired me to commission for him, two books, '*Letters on the Religion essential to Man*, a book you sent me before; and *The World unmasked, or the Philosopher the greatest Cheat*. Send me them by the first opportunity.

The *Bible* you sent me is truly elegant: I only wish it had been in two volumes.

No. 58.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, AT MOREHAM MAINS.

Mauchline, 13th November, 1788.

MADAM,

I HAD the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak; if it is so, poets must be weaker still; for Misses R. and K. and Miss G. M'K., with their flattering attentions and

determined annually, as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

* * * * * * *

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I will take the first conveniency to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship, under the guarantee of the major's hospitality. There will soon be three score and ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a happy day of 'The feast of reason and the flow of soul.'

No. 59.

TO * * * * *

November 8th, 1788.

SIR,

NOTWITHSTANDING the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectaries have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us; still, the destestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, or insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shews that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind, who is undone, the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes, who but sympathizes with the

miseries of this ruined profligate brother? We forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgments to the AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, for the consequent blessings of the glorious revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious; to it we are likewise indebted for the present royal family, the ruling features of whose administration have ever been, mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh, abusive manner, in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the house of Stewart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those, whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils; and we may bless GOD for all his goodness to us as a nation, without, at the same time cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most of us would have done, had we been in their situation.

'The bloody and tyrannical house of Stewart' may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present royal family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were e royal contemporaries of the Stewarts more attive to their subjects' rights? Might not the

epithets of 'bloody and tyrannical' be, with at least equal justice, applied to the house of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, sir, seems to be this—At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was, like other sciences and othe knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stewarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation, and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science, which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people: with us, luckily the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but likewise happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the convenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stewarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless GOD; but cannot join in the ridicule against

them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone of exigency; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr. Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: Who would believe, sir, that, in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people under our national protection, should complain, not against our monarch and a few favourite advisers, but against our WHOLE LEGISLATIVE BODY, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the house of Stewart! I will not, I cannot enter into the merits of the cause, but I dare say the American Congress, in 1776, will be allowed to be as able and as enlightened as the English convention was in 1688; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed house of Stewart.

To conclude, sir; let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of

a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.*

No. 60.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th December, 1788.

MY DEAR HONOURED FRIEND,

YOURS, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. Almost 'blind and wholly deaf,' are melancholy news of human nature; but when told of a much loved and honoured friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part, and gratitude on mine, began a tie, which has gradually and strongly entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom; and I tremble at the omens of your late and present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely, when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns.—My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But be that as it may, the heart of the man, and the fancy of the poet, are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges, and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my

* This letter was sent to the publisher of some newspaper, probably the publisher of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*.

soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie all at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods, and picking up grubs: not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time.—If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, madam, for I will make my threatenings good. I am to be at the new year-day fair of Ayr, and by all that is sacred in the world, friend! I *will* come and see you.

* * * * * *

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old schoolfellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world!—

chanalians. Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas, which please me mightily.

Go fetch me a pint o' wine, &c.*

No. 61.

TO MISS DAVIES,

A young lady who had heard he had been making a ballad on her, enclosing that ballad.

December, 1788.

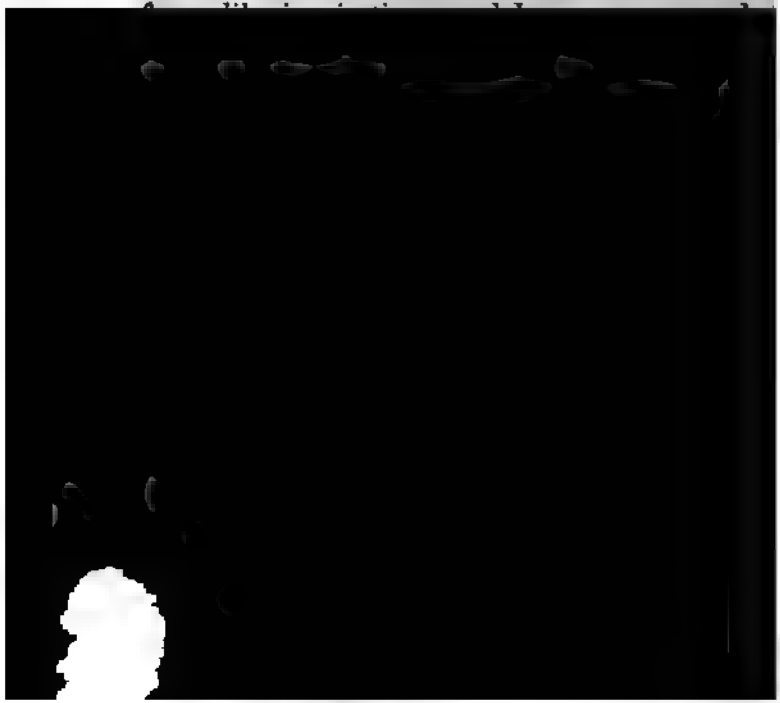
MADAM,

I UNDERSTAND my very worthy neighbour, Mr. Riddel, has informed you that I have made you the subject of some verses. There is something so provoking in the idea of being the burden of a ballad, that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was: so my worthy friend has done me a mischief, which I dare say he never intended; and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman, who had some genius, much eccentricity, and very considerable

* See poems, p. 509.

dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental gro
of life into which one is thrown, wherever t
gentleman met with a character in a more th
ordinary degree congenial to his heart, he used
steal a sketch of the face, merely, he said, a
nota bene to point out the agreeable recollecti
to his memory.—What this gentleman's pe
was to him, is my muse to me; and the verse
do myself the honour to send you are a *memo*
exactly of the same kind that he indulged in.

It may be more owing to the fastidiousnes
my caprice, than the delicacy of my taste, bu
am so often tired, disgusted, and hurt with
insipidity, affectation, and pride of mankind, t
when I meet with a person 'after my own hea
I positively feel what an orthodox protest
would call a species of idolatry, which acts on



No. 62.

TO SIR JOHN WHITEFORD.

December, 1787.

SIR,

MR. M'KENZIE, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend, has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and, (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, Sir, in one or two instances, been patronized by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by * * * * * * friends to them, and honoured acquaintances to me; but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested him for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to enquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of the needy, sharping author, fastening on those in upper life, who honour him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as may, in some measure, palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means,

a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn, but I believe a careless, indolent inattention to economy, is almost inseparable from it: then there must be in the heart of every bard of nature's making, a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, that will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune, which frequently light on hardy impudence and foot-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his, whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank Heaven, my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one, who pretended in the least to the *manners of the gentleman*, should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am, and so inhumanely cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude, I thank you, Sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion—but reverence to GOD, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, Sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest, warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock, who stand to you in a filial relation.

If ever calumny aim the poisoned shaft at them, may friendship be by to ward the blow!

No. 63.

FROM MR. G. BURNS.

Mossgiel, 1st January, 1789.

DEAR BROTHER,

I HAVE just finished my new-year's day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, 'thro' the dark postern of time long elapsed,' I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the GOD of SEASONS is to us; and that, however some clouds may seem to lour over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well.

Your mother and sisters, with Robert the second, join me in the compliments of the season to you and Mrs. Burns, and beg you will remember us in the same manner to William, the first time you see him.

I am, dear brother, yours,

GILBERT BURNS.

No. 64.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, New-Year-Day Morning, 1789.

THIS, Dear Madam, is a morning
wishes, and would to GOD that I came under t
apostle James's description!—*the prayer of*
righteous man availeth much. In that ca
Madam, you should welcome in a year full
blessings: every thing that obstructs or distur
tranquillity and self-enjoyment, should be
moved, and every pleasure that frail humanit
can taste, should be yours. I own myself so litt
a Presbyterian, that I approve of set times a
seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, f

custom of my fore-fathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdad, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer.'

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild briar-rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew, in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plover, in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Eolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a GOD that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave.

* * * * * *

No. 65.

TO DR. MOORE.

Ellisland, near Dumfries,
4th Jan. 1789.

SIR,

AS often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary-sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have, at last, got some business with you, and

solved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day, a day that may never arrive—but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession, the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses, in a good measure, the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend—not only of abilities to judge, but with good nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, Sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I inclose you an essay of mine, in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the epistle addressed to R. G. esq. or Robert Graham, of Fintry, esq. a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story, and to give you the one, I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of——

* * * * * *

I believe I shall, in whole, £100 copy-right included, clear about £400 some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentle-

man has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare.

* * * * * *

To give the rest of my story in brief, I have married 'my Jean' and taken a farm: with the first step I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother, who supports my aged mother; another still younger brother, and three sisters in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about £180 to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much—I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part: I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety, and fraternal affection, into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the *grand-reckoning*. There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy: I have an excise officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr. Graham, who is one of the commissioners of excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyer-general, &c.

* * * * * *

Thus, secure of a livelihood, 'to thee, sweet poetry, delightful maid,' I would consecrate my future days.

No. 66.

TO PROFESSOR D. STEWART.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 20th Jan. 1789.

SIR,

THE enclosed sealed packet I sent to Edinburgh a few days after I had the happiness of meeting you in Ayrshire, but you were gone for the Continent. I have added a few more of my productions, those for which I am indebted to the Nithsdale Muses. The piece inscribed to R. G. esq. is a copy of verses I sent Mr. Graham, of Fintry, accompanying a request for his assistance in a matter, to me, of very great moment. To that gentleman I am already doubly indebted, for deeds of kindness of serious import to my dearest interests, done in a manner grateful to the delicate feelings of sensibility. This poem is a species of composition new to me; but I do not intend it shall be my last essay of the kind, as you will see by the 'Poet's Progress.' These fragments, if my design succeeds, are but a small part of the intended whole. I propose it shall be the work of my utmost exertions ripened by years: of course I do not wish it much known. The fragment, beginning 'A little, upright, pert, tart,' &c., I have not shewn to man living, till now I send it you. It forms the postulata, the axioms, the definition of a character, which, if it appear at all, shall be placed in a variety of lights. This particular part I send you merely as a sample

of my hand at portrait-sketching; but lest idle conjecture should pretend to point out the original, please let it be for your single, sole inspection.

Need I make any apology for this trouble to a gentleman who has treated me with such marked benevolence and peculiar kindness; who has entered into my interests with so much zeal, and on whose critical decisions I can so fully depend? A poet as I am by trade, these decisions to me are of the last consequence. My late transient acquaintance among some of the mere rank and file of greatness, I resign with ease; but to the distinguished champions of genius and learning, I shall be ever ambitious of being known. The native genius and accurate discernment in Mr. Stewart's critical strictures; the justness (iron justice, for he has no bowels of compassion for a poor poetic sinner) of Dr. Gregory's remarks, and

No. 67.

TO BISHOP GEDDES.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 3d Feb. 1789.

VENERABLE FATHER,

AS I am conscious that wherever I am you do me the honour to interest yourself in my welfare, it gives me pleasure to inform you, that I am here at last, stationary in the serious business of life, and have now not only the retired leisure, but the hearty inclination, to attend to those great and important questions—what I am? where I am? and for what I am destined?

In that first concern, the conduct of the man, there was ever but one side on which I was habitually blameable, and there I have secured myself in the way pointed out by nature and nature's GOD. I was sensible that, to so helpless a creature as a poor poet, a wife and a family were incumbrances, which a species of prudence would bid him shun; but when the alternative was, being at eternal warfare with myself, on account of habitual follies, to give them no worse name, which no general example, no licentious wit, no sophistical infidelity, would, to me, ever justify, I must have been a fool to have hesitated, and a madman to have made another choice.

* * * * * *

In the affair of a livelihood, I think myself tolerably secure: I have good hopes of my farm,

but should they fail, I have an excise commission, which, on my simple petition, will, at any time, procure me bread. There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an excise officer, but I do not intend to borrow honour from any profession; and though the salary be comparatively small, it is great to any thing that the first twenty-five years of my life taught me to expect.

* * * * * * *

Thus, with a rational aim and method in life, you may easily guess, my reverend and much-honoured friend, that my characteristical trade is not forgotten; I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the muses. I am determined to study man and nature, and in that view incessantly; and to try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something

No. 68.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4th March, 1789.

HERE am I, my honoured friend, returned safe from the capital. To a man, who has a home, however humble or remote—if that home is like mine, the scene of domestic comfort—the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust.

'Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!'

When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—'What merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule, and the key of riches, in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride?' I have read somewhere of a monarch, (in Spain I think it was) who was so out of humour with the Ptolomean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the CREATOR'S council, he could have saved him a great deal of labour and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Princes' street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his con-

sequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a perspective. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his majesty's liege subjects, in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage, in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow, or making way to a great man, and that too within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence, or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring-glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, madam, in your idea of poor [illegible] which he has addressed to me

allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine * * * * * I give you them, that, as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them, be any real improvement.

Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink mildly fearful even from applause,
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming ****, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall be the image of your mind;
Your manners shall so true your soul express,
That all shall long to know the worth they guess;
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
And even sick'ning envy must approve.*

No. 69.

TO THE REV. P. CARFRAE.

1789.

REV. SIR,

I DO not recollect that I have ever felt a severer pang of shame, than on looking at the date of your obliging letter which accompanied Mr. Mylne's poem.

* * * * * *

* These beautiful lines, it is believed, are the production of the lady to whom this letter is addressed.

I am much to blame: the honour Mr. Mylne has done me, greatly enhanced in its value by the endearing though melancholy circumstance of its being the last production of his muse, deserved a better return.

I have, as you hint, thought of sending a copy of the poem to some periodical publication; but, on second thoughts, I am afraid that, in the present case, it would be an improper step. My success, perhaps as much accidental as merited, has brought an inundation of nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry. Subscription-bills for Scottish poems have so dunned, and daily do dun, the public, that the very name is in danger of contempt. For these reasons, if publishing any of Mr. Mylne's poems in a magazine, &c. be at all prudent, in my opinion, it certainly should not be a Scottish poem. The profits of the la-

judges, be thought the most excellent, and mention it, at the same time, as one of the productions of a Lothian farmer, of respectable character, lately deceased, whose poems his friends had it in idea to publish, soon, by subscription, for the sake of his numerous family;—not in pity to that family, but in justice to what his friends think the poetic merits of the deceased; and to secure, in the most effectual manner, to those tender connections, whose right it is, the pecuniary reward of those merits.

No. 70.

TO DR. MOORE.

Ellisland, 23d March, 1789.

SIR,

THE gentleman who will deliver you this is a Mr. Neilson, a worthy clergyman in my neighbourhood, and a very particular acquaintance of mine. As I have troubled him with this packet, I must turn him over to your goodness, to recompense him for it in a way in which he much needs your assistance, and where you can effectually serve him:—Mr. Neilson is on his way for France, to wait on his grace of Queensberry, on some little business of a good deal of importance to him, and he wishes for your instructions respecting the most eligible mode of travelling, &c. for him, when he has crossed the channel. I should not

have dared to take this liberty with you, but tha
I am told by those who have the honour of you
personal acquaintance, that to be a poor hones
Scotchman is a letter of recommendation to you
and that to have it in your power to serve such
character, gives you much pleasure.

* * * * * *

The enclosed ode is a compliment to the me
mory of the late Mrs. ******, of **********. You,
probably, knew her personally, an honour o
which I cannot boast; but I spent my early years
in her neighbourhood, and among her servants
and tenants, I know that she was detested with
the most heartfelt cordiality. However, in the
particular part of her conduct which roused my
poetic wrath, she was much less blameable. In
January last, on my road to Ayrshire, I had put
up at Bailie Whigham's in Sanquhar, the only

when a good fire, at New Cumnock, had so far recovered my frozen sinews, I sat down and wrote the inclosed ode.*

I was at Edinburgh lately, and settled finally with Mr. Creech; and I must own, that, at last, he has been amicable and fair with me.

No. 71.

TO MR. HILL.

Ellisland, 2d April, 1789.

I WILL make no excuses, my dear Bibliopolis, (God forgive me for murdering language!) that I have sat down to write you on this vile paper.

* * * * * *

It is economy, Sir; it is that cardinal virtue, prudence; so I beg you will sit down, and either compose or borrow a panegyric. If you are going to borrow, apply to

* * * * * *

to compose, or rather to compound, something very clever on my remarkable frugality; that I write to one of my most esteemed friends on this wretched paper, which was originally intended for the venal fist of some drunken exciseman, to take dirty notes in a miserable vault of an ale-cellar.

* 'Dweller in yon dungeon dark,' &c.—See poems p. 156.

O Frugality! thou mother of ten thousand bl
ings—thou cook of fat beef and dainty greens
thou manufacturer of warm Shetland hose, c
comfortable surtouts!—thou old housewife, da
ing thy decayed stockings with thy ancient sp
tacles on thy aged nose!—lead me, hand me in t
clutching palsied fist, up those heights, and throu
those thickets, hitherto inaccessible, and imper
ous to my anxious, weary feet:—not those P
nassian craggs, bleak and barren, where the hung
worshippers of fame are, breathless, clamberi
hanging between heaven and hell; but those gl
tering cliffs of Potosi, where the all-sufficient, s
powerful deity, Wealth, holds his immediate co
of joys and pleasures; where the sunny expos
of plenty, and the hot walls of profusion, produ
those blissful fruits of luxury, exotics in this wo
and natives of paradise!—Thou withered sy

But to descend from heroics,

* * * * * *

I want a Shakespeare; I want likewise an English dictionary—Johnson's, I suppose, is best. In these and all my prose commissions, the cheapest is always the best for me. There is a small debt of honour that I owe Mr. Robert Cleghorn, in Saughton mills, my worthy friend and your well-wisher. Please give him, and urge him to take it, the first time you see him, ten shillings, worth of any thing you have to sell, and place it to my account.

The library scheme that I mentioned to you, is already begun, under the direction of Captain Riddel. There is another in emulation of it going on at Closeburn, under the auspices of Mr. Monteith, of Closeburn, which will be on a greater scale than ours. Captain R. gave his infant society a great many of his old books, else I had written you on that subject; but, one of these days, I shall trouble you with a commission for 'The Monkland Friendly Society'—a copy of *The Spectator*, *Mirror*, and *Lounger*; *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Guthrie's Geographical Grammar*, with some religious pieces, will likely be our first order.

When I grow richer, I will write to you on gilt post, to make amends for this sheet. At present, every guinea has a five guinea errand with,

My dear Sir,

Your faithful, poor, but honest friend,

R. B.

No. 72.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4th April, 1789.

I NO sooner hit on any poetic plan o fancy, but I wish to send it to you; and if know ing and reading these give half the pleasure t you, that communicating them to you gives t me, I am satisfied.

* * * * * *

I have a poetic whim in my head, which I a present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the Righ Hon. C. J. Fox; but how long that fancy ma hold, I cannot say. A few of the first lines I hav just rough-sketched as follows:

No. 73.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland 4th May, 1789.

SIR,

YOUR *duty-free* favour of the 26th April I received two days ago; I will not say I perused it with pleasure; that is the cold compliment of ceremony; I perused it, Sir, with delicious satisfaction—In short it is such a letter, that not you, nor your friend, but the legislature, by express proviso in their postage laws, should frank. A letter informed with the soul of friendship is such an honour to human nature, that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to super-eminent virtue.

I have just put the last hand to a little poem which I think will be something to your taste.

One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when they all of them have young ones. Indeed there is something in that business of destroying for our sport individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue.

'Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,' &c.—
See poems, p. 151.

Let me know how you like my poem. I am doubtful whether it would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one altogether.

C—— is a glorious production of the author of man. You, he, and the noble Colonel of the C—— F—— are to me

'Dear as the ruddy drops which warm the breast.'

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of, '*Three gude fellows ayont the glen.*'

No. 74.

TO MR. M'AULEY OF DUMBARTON.

4th June, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I am not without my fears respecting my fate, at that grand, universal inquest of right and wrong, commonly called *The Last Day*, yet I trust there is one sin, which that arch-vagabond, Satan, who I understand is to be king's evidence, cannot throw in my teeth, I mean ingratitude. There is a certain pretty large quantum of kindness for which I remain, and from inability, I fear must still remain, your debtor; but though unable to repay the debt, I assure you, sir, I shall ever warmly remember the obligation. It gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear, by my

old acquaintance, Mr. Kennedy, that you are, in immortal Allan's language, 'Hale and weel, and living;' and that your charming family are well, and promising to be an amiable and respectful addition to the company of performers, whom the great Manager of the drama of Man is bringing into action for the succeeding age.

With respect to my welfare, a subject in which you once warmly and effectively interested yourself, I am here in my old way, holding my plough, marking the growth of my corn, or the health of my dairy; and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather, or holding an intrigue with the Muses; the only gipseys with whom I have now any intercourse. As I am entered into the holy state of matrimony, I trust my face is turned completely Zion-ward; and as it is a rule with all honest fellows, to repeat no grievances, I hope that the little poetic licences of former days, will of course fall under the oblivious influence of some good-natured statute of celestial proscription. In my family devotion, which like a good presbyterian, I occasionally give to my household folks, I am extremely fond of the psalm, 'Let not the errors of my youth," &c. and that other, 'Lo, children are God's heritage," &c. in which last Mrs. Burns, who by the bye, has a glorious "wood-note wild" at either old song or psalmody, joins me with the pathos of Handel's Messiah.

* * * * * *

No. 75.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 21st June, 1789.

DEAR MADAM,

WILL you take the effusions, the miserable effusions of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring. I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages.

* * * * * * *

Monday Evening.

I have just heard [illegible]

fection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave; must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther, and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though *to appearance*, he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore, Jesus Christ was from God.

* * * * * *

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, Madam, of my creed? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one, whose good opinion I value almost next to the approbation of my own mind.

No. 76.

FROM DR. MOORE.

Clifford-street, 10th June, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

I THANK you for the different communications you have made me of your occasional productions in manuscript, all of which have merit, and some of them merit of a different kind

from what appears in the poems you have published. You ought carefully to preserve all your occasional productions, to correct and improve them at your leisure; and when you can select as many of these as will make a volume, publish it either at Edinburgh or London, by subscription: on such an occasion, it may be in my power, and is very much in my inclination, to be of service to you.

If I were to offer an opinion, it would be, that in your future productions you should abandon the Scottish stanza and dialect, and adopt the measure and language of modern English poetry.

The stanza which you use in imitation of *Christ kirk on the green*, with the tiresome repetition of 'that day,' is fatiguing to English ears, and I should think not very agreeable to Scottish.

ready for the press; and this, without diverting you from every proper attention to the study and practice of husbandry, in which I understand you are very learned, and which I fancy you will chuse to adhere to as a wife, while poetry amuses you from time to time as a mistress. The former, like a prudent wife, must not shew ill humour, although you retain a sneaking kindness to this agreeable gipsey, and pay her occasional visits, which in no manner alienates your heart from your lawful spouse, but tend on the contrary to promote her interest.

I desired Mr. Cadell to write to Mr. Creech to send you a copy of *Zeluco*. This performance has had great success here, but I shall be glad to have your opinion of it, because I value your opinion, and because I know you are above saying what you do not think.

I beg you will offer my best wishes to my very good friend, Mrs. Hamilton, who I understand is your neighbour. If she is as happy as I wish her, she is happy enough. Make my compliments also to Mrs. Burns, and believe me to be, with sincere esteem,

Dear Sir, Yours, &c.

No. 77.

FROM MR. ******.

London, 5th August, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

EXCUSE me when I say, that the uncommon abilities which you possess, must render your correspondence very acceptable to any one. I can assure you, I am particularly proud of your partiality, and shall endeavour by every method in my power, to merit a continuance of your politeness.

* * * * * *

When you can spare a few moments I should

representations, I am yet to learn that he inherits his convivial powers.

There was such a richness of conversation, such a plentitude of fancy and attraction in him, that when I call the happy period of our intercourse to my memory, I feel myself in a state of delirium. I was then younger than him by eight or ten years, but his manner was so felicitous, that he enraptured every person around him, and infused into the hearts of the young and old, the spirit and animation which operated on his own mind.

I am, Dear Sir, Yours, &c.

No. 78.

TO MR. ******.

In answer to the foregoing.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE hurry of a farmer in this particular season, and the indolence of a poet at all times and seasons, will, I hope, plead my excuse for neglecting so long to answer your obliging letter of the fifth of August.

That you have done well in quitting your laborious concern in * * * * I do not doubt; the weighty reasons you mention, were, I hope very, and deservedly indeed, weighty ones, and your health is a matter of the last importance; but whether the remaining proprietors of the paper have also done well, is what I much doubt.

The * * * * so far as I was a reader, exhibited such a brilliancy of point, such an elegance of paragraph, and such a variety of intelligence, that I can hardly conceive it possible to continue a daily paper in the same degree of excellence; but if there was a man who had abilities equal to the task, that man's assistance the proprietors have lost.

* * * * * *

When I received your letter I was transcribing for * * * *, my letter to the magistrates of the Canongate, Edinburgh, begging their permission to place a tomb-stone over poor Ferguson, and their edict in consequence of my petition, but now I shall send them to * * * * * *. Poor Ferguson! If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is; and if there be a good God presiding over all nature, which I am sure there is; thou art now enjoying existence in a glorious world, where worth of the heart alone is distinction in the man; where riches, deprived of all their pleasure-purchasing powers, return to their native sordid matter; where titles and honours are the disregarded reveries of an idle dream; and where that heavy virtue, which is the negative consequence of steady dulness, and those thoughtless, though often destructive follies, which are the unavoidable abberrations of frail human nature, will be thrown into equal oblivion as if they had never been!

Adieu, my dear Sir! So soon as your present views and schemes are concentred in an aim, I shall be glad to hear from you; as your welfare and happiness is by no means a subject indifferent to

Yours, &c.

No. 79.

TO MISS WILLIAMS.

1789.

MADAM,

OF the many problems in the nature of that wonderful creature, Man, this is one of the most extraordinary, that he shall go on from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, or perhaps from year to year, suffering a hundred times more in an hour from the impotent consciousness of neglecting what he ought to do, than the very doing of it would cost him. I am deeply indebted to you, first for a most elegant poetic compliment;* then for a polite obliging letter; and, lastly, for your excellent poem on the Slave-Trade; and yet, wretch that I am! though the debts were debts of honour, and the creditor a lady, I have put off and put off even the very acknowledgment of the obligation, until you must indeed be the very angel I take you for, if you can forgive me.

Your poem I have read with the highest pleasure. I have a way, whenever I read a book, I mean a book in our own trade, Madam, a poetic one, and when it is my own property, that I take a pencil and mark at the ends of verses, or note on margins and odd paper, little criticisms of appro-

* See page 40.

bation or disapprobation as I peruse along. I will make no apology for presenting you with a few unconnected thoughts that occurred to me in my repeated perusals of your poem. I want to shew you that I have honesty enough to tell you what I take to be truths, even when they are not quite on the side of approbation; and I do it in the firm faith, that you have equal greatness of mind to hear them with pleasure.

I had lately the honour of a letter from Dr. Moore, where he tells me that he has sent me some books. They are not yet come to hand, but I hear they are on the way.

Wishing you all success in your progress in the path of fame; and that you may equally escape the danger of stumbling through incautious speed, or losing ground through loitering neglect,

I have the honour to be, &c.

No. 80.

FROM MISS WILLIAMS.

7th August, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

I DO not lose a moment in returning you my sincere acknowledgments for your letter, and your criticism on my poem, which is a very flattering proof that you have read it with attention. I think your objections are perfectly just, except in one instance——

* * * * * *

You have indeed been very profuse of panegyric on my little performance. A much less portion of applause from *you* would have been gratifying to me; since I think its value depends entirely upon the source from whence it proceeds—the incense of praise, like other incense, is more grateful from the quality, than the quantity of the odour.

I hope you still cultivate the pleasures of poetry, which are precious, even independent of the rewards of fame. Perhaps the most valuable property of poetry is its power of disengaging the mind from worldly cares, and leading the imagination to the richest springs of intellectual enjoyment; since, however frequently life may be checquered with gloomy scenes, those who truly love the Muse can always find one little path adorned with flowers and cheered by sunshine.

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No. 81.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 6th Sept. 1789.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE mentioned in my last, my appointment to the excise, and the birth of little Frank, who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honourable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper;

though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling bridge.

I had some time ago an epistle, part poetic, and part prosaic, from your poetess, Mrs. J. L—, a very ingenious, but modest composition. I should have written her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country; and I am happy to add, always to the honour of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August, struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present.

* * * * * *

Would I could write you a letter of comfort! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure, as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition, that should equal the *Iliad*. Religion, my dear friend, is a true comfort! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence; a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least near four thousand years, have, in some mode or other-

firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but when I reflected, that I was opposing the most ardent wishes, and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favourite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the book of Job,

'Against the day of battle and of war'—

spoken of religion.

'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night,
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction, or repels his dart;
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.'

I have been very busy with *Zeluco*. The Doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall however digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. *Zeluco* is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende!*

No. 82.

TO R. GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

9th December, 1789.

SIR,

I HAVE a good while had a wish to trouble you with a letter, and had certainly done it long ere now—but for a humiliating something that throws cold water on the resolution; as if one should say, 'You have found Mr. Graham a very powerful and kind friend indeed, and that interest he is so kindly taking in your concerns, you ought by every thing in your power to keep alive and cherish.'—Now, though since God has thought

visits of good angels, are short and far between; but I meet them now and then as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr. I take the liberty to enclose you a few bagatelles, all of them the productions of my leisure thoughts in my excise rides.

If you know or have ever seen Captain Grose, the antiquarian, you will enter into my humour that is in the verses on him. Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London newspaper. Though I dare say you have none of the solemn-league-and-covenant fire, which shone so conspicuous in lord George Gordon, and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet I think you must have heard of Dr. M'Gill, one of the clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help him, poor man! Though he is one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest of the whole priesthood of the Kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor Doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being thrown out to the mercy of the winter-winds. The inclosed ballad on that business is I confess too local, but I laughed myself at some conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.

The election ballad, as you will see, alludes to the present canvas in our string of boroughs. I do not believe there will be such a hard run match in the whole general election.*

* * * * * *

* This alludes to the contest for the borough of Dumfries, between the duke of Queensberry's interest and that of Sir James Johnstone.

I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for, individuals of both parties, but a man who has it in his power to be the father of a country, and who * * * * * * * is a character that one cannot speak of with patience.

Sir. J. J. does 'what man can do,' but yet I doubt his fate.

* * * * * *

No. 83.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 13th December, 1789.

by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter. Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life, is a something at which he recoils.

> 'Tell us, ye dead; will none of you in pity
> Disclose the secret———
> *What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be!*
> ————————'tis no matter:
> A little time will make us learn'd as you are.'

Can it be possible, that when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced, that I am no more to those that knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles, and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable sages, and holy flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories, of another world beyond death? or are they all alike, baseless visions and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it! There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world, against which he so long and so bravely struggled. There should I meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life;

the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me——Muir! thy weaknesses were the abberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with every thing generous, manly, and noble; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine!—There should I with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost, my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy, and love.

My Mary, dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

.....

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters! I

is impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl, which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better, or indeed any thing at all.

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news of James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know; as I promise you, on the sincerity of a man, who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honoured friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre miserable.* R. B.

No. 84.

TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR.

SIR,

THE following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the statistical account, transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale. I beg leave to send to you, because it is new, and may be useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of very great im-

portance, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn, for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddel, Esq. of Glenriddel, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr. Riddel got a number of his own tenants, and farming neighbours, to form themselves into a society for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance, or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings: and at each of their meetings, which were held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry money, and the credit which they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase, was always decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He whose name stood for that night, first on the list, had his choice of what volume he-

pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first; the third after the second, and so on to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting, was last at this; he who had been second was first; and so on through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement, the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves; and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.

At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr. Riddel's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him, and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes. It will easily be guessed, that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of this little library, were, *Blair's Sermons*, *Robertson's History of Scotland*, *Hume's History of the Stewarts*, *The Spectator*, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Chrysal*, *Don Quixote*, *Joseph Andrews*, &c. A peasant who can read, and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour, who perhaps stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success,

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

A PEASANT.*

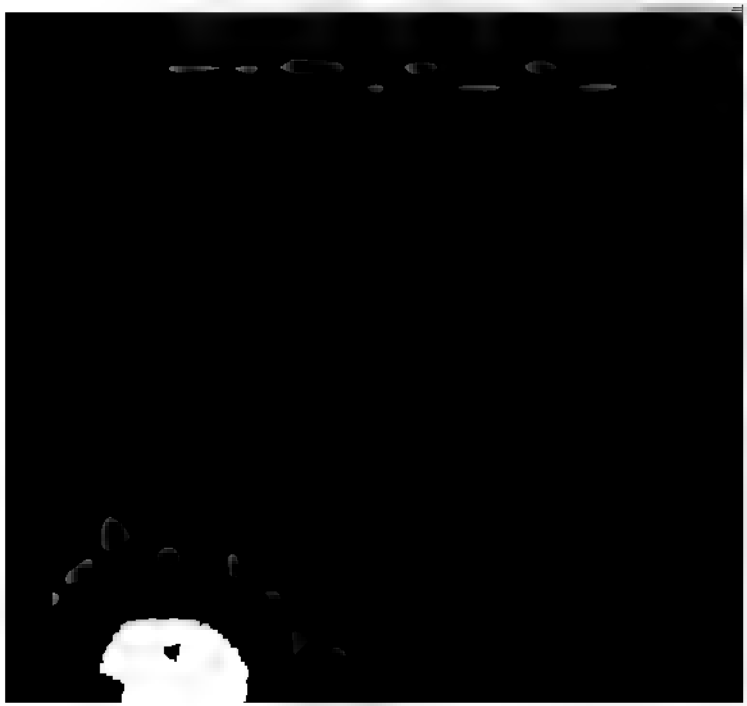
* The above is extracted from the third volume of Sir John Sinclair's Statistics, *p.* 598.—It was enclosed to Sir

No. 85.

TO CHARLES SHARPE ESQ. OF HODDO

Under a fictitious Signature, enclosing a ballad,
1790 *or* 1791.

IT is true, Sir, you are a gentlema
rank and fortune, and I am a poor devil: yo
a feather in the cap of society, and I am a
hobnail in his shoes; yet I have the honour t
long to the same family with you, and on
score I now address you. You will perhaps
pect that I am going to claim affinity with
ancient and honourable house of Kilpatrick:
no, Sir: I cannot indeed be properly said t



ng to any house, or even any province or king-
om; as my mother, who for many years was
pouse to a marching regiment, gave me into this
d world, aboard the packet boat, somewhere
etween Donaghadee and Portpatrick. By our
ommon family, I mean, Sir, the family of the
Muses. I am a fiddler and a poet; and you, I
m told, play an exquisite violin, and have a
tandard taste in the Belles Lettres. The other
ay, a brother catgut gave me a charming Scots
ir of your composition. If I was pleased with
he tune, I was in raptures with the title you have
iven it; and, taking up the idea, I have spun it
nto the three stanzas enclosed. You will allow
ne, Sir, to present you them, as the dearest offer-
ng that a misbegotten son of poverty and rhyme
as to give? I have a longing to take you by the
and and unburden my heart, by saying—'Sir, I
onour you as a man who supports the dignity of
human nature, amid an age when frivolity and
varice have, between them, debased us below the
rutes, that perish!' But, alas, Sir! to me you
re unapproachable. It is true, the Muses bap-
ized me in Castalian streams, but the thoughtless
ipseys forgot to give me a name. As the sex
ave served many a good fellow, the Nine have
given me a great deal of pleasure, but, bewitching
ades! they have beggared me. Would they but
pare me a little of their cast-linen! were it only
to put it in my power to say that I have a shirt
on my back! But the idle wenches, like Solo-
mon's lilies, 'they toil not, neither do they spin;'
o I must e'en continue to tie my remnant of a
ravat, like the hangman's rope, round my naked

throat, and coax my galligaskins to keep together their many-coloured fragments. As to the affair of shoes, I have given that up.—My pilgrimages in my ballad-trade from town to town, and on your stony-hearted turnpikes too, are what not even the hide of Job's Behemoth could bear. The coat on my back is no more: I shall not speak evil of the dead. It would be equally unhandsome and ungrateful to find fault with my old surtout, which so kindly supplies and conceals the want of that coat. My hat indeed is a great favourite; and though I got it literally for an old song, I would not exchange it for the best beaver in Britain. I was, during several years, a kind of factotum servant to a country clergyman, where I pickt up a good many scraps of learning, particularly in some branches of the mathematics. Whenever I feel inclined to rest myself on my way, I take my seat under a hedge, laying my poetic wallet on my one side, and my fiddle-case on the other, and placing my hat between my legs, I can by means of its brim, or rather brims, go through the whole doctrine of the Conic Sections.

However, Sir, don't let me mislead you, as if I would interest your pity. Fortune has so much forsaken me, that she has taught me to live without her; and, amid all my rags and poverty, I am as independent, and much more happy than a monarch of the world. According to the hackneyed metaphor, I value the several actors in the great drama of life, simply as they act their parts. I can look on a worthless fellow of a duke with unqualified contempt; and can regard an honest scavenger with sincere respect. As you, Sir, go

through your rôle with such distinguished merit, permit me to make one in the chorus of universal applause, and assure you that, with the highest respect,

I have the honour to be, &c.

No. 86.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

Ellisland, 11th January, 1790.

DEAR BROTHER,

I MEAN to take advantage of the frank, though I have not in my present frame of mind much appetite for exertion in writing. My nerves are in a * * * * state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself. It is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go to ****! I'll fight it out and be off with it.

We have gotten a set of very decent players here just now. I have seen them an evening or two. David Campbell, in Ayr, wrote to me by the manager of the company, a Mr. Sutherland, who is a man of apparent worth.—On New-year-day evening I gave him the following Prologue, which he spouted to his audience with applause.

'No song nor dance I bring from yon great city,' &c.

See poems. p. 258.

I can no more.—If once I was clear of this * * * * farm, I should respire more at ease.

No. 87.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 25th January, 179

IT has been owing to unremitting l
of business that I have not written to you,
dam, long ere now. My health is greatly b
and I now begin once more to share in satisfa
and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creat

Many thanks, my much esteemed friend
your kind letters: but why will you make me
the risk of being contemptible and mercena
my own eyes? When I pique myself on m
dependent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic lic

: bottom with the Aurora frigate! I forget at part of Scotland had the honour of giving n birth, but he was the son of obscurity and sfortune. He was one of those daring adven-rous spirits, which Scotland beyond any other untry is remarkable for producing. Little does e fond mother think, as she hangs delighted er the sweet little leech at her bosom, where e poor fellow may hereafter wander, and what y be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old ottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude nplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart:

'Little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die!'

Old Scottish songs are, you know, a favourite dy and pursuit of mine: and now I am on that bject, allow me to give you two stanzas of ano-er old simple ballad, which I am sure will please u. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruin-female, lamenting her fate. She concludes th this pathetic wish:

'O that my father had ne'er on me smil'd;
O that my mother had ne'er to me sung!
O that my cradle had never been rock'd;
But that I had died when I was young!

O that the grave it were my bed;
My blankets were my winding sheet;
The clocks* and the worms my bedfellows a';
And O see sound as I should sleep!'

* Beetles.

I do not remember in all my reading to have met with any thing more truly the language of misery, than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love; to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson* the small pox. They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him, acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest, and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry until you are

'Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.'

Having written to you twice without having heard from you, I am apt to think my letters have miscarried. My conjecture is only framed upon the chapter of accidents turning up against me, as it too often does, in the trivial, and I may with truth add, the more important affairs of life; but I shall continue occasionally to inform you what is going on among the circle of your friends in these parts. In these days of merriment, I have frequently heard your name *proclaimed* at the jovial board—under the roof of our hospitable friend at Stenhouse-mills, there were no

'Lingering moments number'd with care.'

I saw your *Address to the New-year* in the Dumfries Journal. Of your productions I shall say nothing, but my acquaintances alledge, that when your name is mentioned, which every man of celebrity must know often happens, I am the champion, the Mendoza, against all snarling critics, and narrow-minded reptiles, of whom *a few* on this planet do *crawl*.

With best compliments to your wife, and her black-eyed sister, I remain yours, &c.

No. 89.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 13th February, 1790.

I BEG your pardon, my dear and much valued friend, for writing to you on this very unfashionable, unsightly sheet—

'My poverty but not my will consents.'

But to make amends, since of modish post I have none, except one poor widowed half-sheet of gilt, which lies in my drawer among my plebeian fool's-cap pages, like the widow of a man of fashion, whom that unpolite scoundrel, Necessity, has

fragment which was intended for you some time ago, and be convinced that I can *antithesize* sentiment, and *circumvolute* periods, as well as any coiner of phrase in the regions of philology.

December, 1789.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

WHERE are you? And what are you doing? Can you be that son of levity, who takes up a friendship as he takes up a fashion? or are you, like some other of the worthiest fellows in the world, the victim of indolence, laden with fetters of ever-increasing weight?

What strange beings we are! Since we have a portion of conscious existence, equally capable of enjoying pleasure, happiness, and rapture, or of suffering pain, wretchedness and misery, it is surely worthy of an inquiry, whether there be not such a thing as a science of life; whether method, economy, and fertility of expedients, be not applicable to enjoyment; and whether there be not a want of dexterity in pleasure, which renders our little scantling of happiness still less; and a profuseness, an intoxication in bliss, which leads to satiety, disgust, and self-abhorrence. There is not a doubt but that health, talents, character, decent competency, respectable friends, are real substantial blessings; and yet do we not daily see those who enjoy many or all of these good things, contrive notwithstanding to be as unhappy as others to whose lot few of them have fallen. I believe one great source of this mistake or misconduct is owing to a certain stimulus, with us called ambition, which goads us up the hill of life, not

as we ascend other eminences, for the laudable curiosity of viewing an extended landscape, but rather for the dishonest pride of looking down on others of our fellow-creatures, seemingly diminutive, in humbler stations, &c. &c.

.....

Sunday, 14th February, 1790.

GOD help me! I am now obliged to join

'Night to day, and Sunday to the week.'

If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am ****** past redemption, and what is worse, ****** to all eternity. I am deeply read in *Boston's Four-fold State, Marshall on Sanctification, Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest, &c.* but 'There is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there' for me, so I shall e'en turn Armi-

eems *too good news to be true.* That we enter into a new scene of existence, where, t from want and pain we shall enjoy our- and our friends without satiety or separa- how much should I be indebted to any one uld fully assure me that this was certain!

* * * * * *

time is once more expired. I will write to leghorn soon. God bless him and all his is! And may all the powers that preside nviviality and friendship, be present with r kindest influence, when the bearer of this, me, and you meet! I wish I could also me.—I think we should be * * * * lly, brethren, farewell! Whatsoever things ely, whatsoever things are gentle, whatso- ings are charitable, whatsoever things and think on these things, and think on

ROBERT BURNS.

No. 90.

TO MR. HILL.

Ellisland, 2d March, 1790.

AT a late meeting of the Monkland ly Society, it was resolved to augment their by the following books, which you are to as soon as possible:—*The Mirror, The r, Man of Feeling, Man of the World,* or my own sake I wish to have by the first *Knox's History of the Reformation; Rae's*

History of the Rebellion in 1715; any good *History of the Rebellion in* 1745; *A Display of the Secession Act and Testimony*, by Mr. GIB; *Harvey's Meditations*, *Beveridge's Thoughts*; and another copy of *Watson's Body of Divinity*.

I wrote to Mr. A. Masterton three or four months ago, to pay some money he owed me into your hands, and lately I wrote to you to the same purpose, but I have heard from neither one nor other of you.

In addition to the books I commissioned in my last, I want very much, *An Index to the Excise Laws, or an Abridgement of all the Statutes now in force, relative to the Excise*, by Jellinger Symons; I want three copies of this book; if it is now to be had, cheap or dear, get it for me. An honest country neighbour of mine wants too, *A Family Bible*, the larger the better, but second-handed, for he does not chuse to give above ten shillings for the book. I want likewise for myself, as you can pick them up, second-handed or cheap, copies of *Otway's Dramatic Works*, *Ben Johnson's*, *Dryden's*, *Congreve's*, *Wycherley's*, *Vanbrugh's*, *Cibber's*, or any *Dramatic Works* of the more modern, *Macklin*, *Garrick*, *Foote*, *Colman*, or *Sheridan*. A good copy too of *Moliere*, in French, I much want. Any other good dramatic authors in that language I want also; but comic authors chiefly, though I should wish to have *Racine*, *Corneille*, and *Voltaire* too. I am in no hurry for all, or any of these, but if you accidentally meet with them very cheap, get them for me.

And now, to quit the dry walk of business, how do you do, my dear friend? and how is Mrs. Hill? I trust if now and then not so *elegantly* handsome, at least as amiable, and sings as divinely as ever. My good wife too has a charming 'wood-note wild;' now could we four——

* * * * * *

I am out of all patience with this vile world, for one thing. Mankind are by nature benevolent creatures; except in a few scoundrelly instances, I do not think that avarice of the good things we chance to have, is born with us; but we are placed here amid so much nakedness, and hunger, and poverty, and want, that we are under a cursed necessity of studying selfishness, in order that we may EXIST! Still there are, in every age, a few souls, that all the wants and woes of life cannot debase to selfishness, or even to the necessary alloy of caution and prudence. If ever I am in danger of vanity, it is when I contemplate myself on this side of my disposition and character. God knows I am no saint; I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for; but if I could, and I believe I do it as far as I can, I would wipe away all tears from all eyes. Adieu!

No. 91.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 10th April, 1790.

I HAVE just now, my ever honoured friend, enjoyed a very high luxury, in reading a paper of the *Lounger*. You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Adventurer*, *Rambler*, and *World*; but still with a certain regret, that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the union, that can counterbalance the annihilation of her independence, and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith—

> '——States of native liberty possest,
> Tho' very poor, may yet be very blest.'

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, 'English ambassador, English court,' &c. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by 'the Commons of England.' Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe in my conscience, such ideas as, 'my country; her independence; her honour; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land;' &c.—I believe these, among your *men of the world;* men who in fact guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrongheadedness. They

* * * *, as miscellaneous as a news-paper, as short as a hungry grace-before-meat, or as long as a law-paper in the Douglas cause; as ill spelt as country John's billet-doux, or as unsightly a scrawl as Betty Byre-mucker's answer to it; I hope, considering circumstances, you will forgive it; and as it will put you to no expence of postage, I shall have the less reflection about it.

I am sadly ungrateful, in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, *Zeluco*. In fact, you are in some degree blameable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work; which so flattered me, that nothing less would serve my over-weening fancy, than a formal criticism on the book. In fact, I have gravely planned a comparative view of you, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollet, in

I have just received from my gentleman, that horrid summons in the book of Revelations—'That time shall be no more!'

The little collection of sonnets have some charming poetry in them. If *indeed* I am indebted to the fair author for the book, and not, as I rather suspect, to a celebrated author of the other sex, I should certainly have written to the lady, with my grateful acknowledgments, and my own ideas of the comparative excellence of her pieces. I would do this last, not from any vanity of thinking that my remarks could be of much consequence to Mrs. Smith, but merely from my own feelings as an author, doing as I would be done by.

No. 93.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

8th August, 1790.

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER a long day's toil, plague, and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long? It was owing to hurry, indolence, and fifty other things; in short, to any thing—but forgetfulness of *la plus amiable de son sexe*. By the bye, you are indebted your best courtesy to me for this last compliment; as I pay it from my sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare, in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to *you* will ease a little my troubled soul. Sorely has it been bruised to-day! A *ci-devant* friend of mine, and an intimate acquaintance of yours, has given my feelings a wound, that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure. He has wounded my pride!

* * * * * * * *

No. 94.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 8th August, 1790.

FORGIVE me, my once dear, and ever dear friend, my seeming negligence. You cannot sit down and fancy the busy life I lead.

I laid down my goose feather to beat my brains for an apt simile, and had some thoughts of a country grannum at a family christening; a bride on the market-day before her marriage; *; a tavern-keeper at an election-dinner; &c. &c.—but the resemblance that hits my fancy best is, that blackguard miscreant, Satan, who roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching* whom he may devour. However, tossed about as I am, if I chuse (and who would not chuse) to bind down with the crampets of attention, the brazen foundation of integrity, I may rear up the superstructure of Independence, and

from its daring turrets bid defiance to the storms of fate. And is not this a 'consummation devoutly to be wished?'

'Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;
Lord of the lion-heart and eagle eye!
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky!'

Are not these noble verses? They are the introduction of *Smollet's Ode to Independence:* if you have not seen the poem, I will send it to you. How wretched is the man that hangs on by the favours of the great. To shrink from every dignity of man, at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who amid all his tinsel glitter, and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art—and perhaps not so well formed as thou art—came into the world a puling infant as thou didst, and must go out of it, as all men must, a naked corse!

* * * * * * * * *

No. 95.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

November, 1790.

'AS cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.'

Fate has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sor-

row which I have received. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—'Rejoice with them that do rejoice'—for me, *to sing* for joy is no new thing; but *to preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture, to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally jumped for joy—How could such a mercurial creature as a poet, lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best friend. I seized my gilt-headed Wangee rod, an instrument indispensibly necessary in my left hand, in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quick and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith, to amuse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of prose was impossible. Mrs. Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere compli-

I have a copy of *Tam o' Shanter* ready to send you by the first opportunity: it is too heavy to send by post.

I heard of Mr. Corbet lately. He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favour me soon with an account of your good folks; if Mrs. H. is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.

No. 96.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 23d January, 1791.

MANY happy returns of the season to you, my dear friend! As many of the good things of this life, as is consistent with the usual mixture of good and evil in the cup of being!

I have just finished a poem, which you will receive enclosed. It is my first essay in the way of tales.

I have these several months been hammering at an elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnet. I have got, and can get, no farther than the following fragment, on which please give me your strictures. In all kinds of poetic composition, I set great store by your opinion; but in sentimental verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman Catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of the Holy Father, than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets as text verses.

'Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize,' &c.
See Poems, p. 202.

Let me hear from you soon. Adieu!

No. 97.

TO MR. PETER HILL.

17th January, 1791.

TAKE these two guineas, and place them over against that ****** account of yours! which has gagged my mouth these five or six months! I can as little write good things as apologies to the man I owe money to. O the supreme

ing on to the guilty assignation; she, who without the same necessities to plead, riots nightly in the same guilty trade.

Well! divines may say of it what they please, but execration is to the mind, what phlebotomy is to the body: the vital sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations.

No. 98.

FROM A. F. TYTLER, ESQ.

Edinburgh, 12th March, 1791.

DEAR SIR,

MR. HILL yesterday put into my hands a sheet of *Grose's Antiquities*, containing a

high reputation. 'In the introductory part, where you paint the character of your hero, and exhibit him at the alehouse *ingle*, with his tippling cronies, you have delineated nature with a humour and *naïveté* that would do honour to Matthew Prior; but when you describe the infernal orgies of the witches' sabbath, and the hellish scenery in which they are exhibited, you display a power of imagination that Shakespeare himself could not have exceeded. I know not that I have ever met with a picture of more horrible fancy than the following:

'Coffins stood round like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantrip slight,
Each in his cauld hand held a light.'

But when I came to the succeeding lines, my blood ran cold within me:

'A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son of life bereft;
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft.'

And here, after the two following lines, 'Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',' &c. the descriptive part might perhaps have been better closed, than the four lines which succeed, which though good in themselves, yet as they derive all their merit from the satire they contain, are here rather misplaced among the circumstances of pure horror. The initiation of the young witch is most happily described—the effect of her charms exhibited in the dance on Satan himself—the apostrophe—'Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie!'—the

transport of Tam, who forgets his situation, and enters completely into the spirit of the scene, are all features of high merit in this excellent composition. The only fault that it possesses, is, that the winding up, or conclusion of the story, is not commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive and characteristic painting of the preceding parts.—The preparation is fine, but the result is not adequate. But for this, perhaps you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale.

And now that I have got out my mind, and feel a little relieved of the weight of that debt I owed you, let me end this desultory scroll by an advice: you have proved your talent for a species of composition in which but a very few of our own poets have succeeded—Go on—write more tales in the same style—you will eclipse Prior and La Fontaine; for with equal wit, equal power of numbers, and equal *naïveté* of expression, you have a bolder, and more vigorous imagination,

I am, dear Sir, with much esteem,
Yours, &c.

No. 99.

TO A. F. TYTLER, ESQ.

SIR,

NOTHING less than the unfortunate accident I have met with, could have prevented my grateful acknowledgments for your letter.

his own favourite poem, and that an essay in a walk of the muses entirely new to him, where consequently his hopes and fears were on the most anxious alarm for his success in the attempt; to have that poem so much applauded by one of the first judges, was the most delicious vibration that ever trilled along the heart-strings of a poor poet. However, Providence, to keep up the proper proportion of evil with the good, which it seems is necessary in this sublunary state, thought proper to check my exultation by a very serious misfortune. A day or two after I received your letter, my horse came down with me and broke my right arm. As this is the first service my arm has done me since its disaster, I find myself unable to do more than just in general terms to thank you for this additional instance of your patronage and friendship. As to the faults you detected in the piece, they are truly there; one of them, the hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out; as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly adduce it cannot easily be remedied. Your approbation, Sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honour to be, &c.

No. 100.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 7th Feb. 1791.

WHEN I tell you, Madam, that b
fall, not from my horse but with my horse, I h
been a cripple some time, and that this is
first day my arm and hand have been able to se
me in writing; you will allow that it is too g
an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silen
I am now getting better, and am able to rhym
little, which implies some tolerable ease; as I c
not think that the most poetic genius is able
compose on the rack

The parent's heart, that nestled fond in thee,
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and care;
So deck'd the woodbine sweet yon aged tree,
So from it ravish'd, leaves it bleak and bare.

* * * * * *

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. This last, Madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the small-pox and measles over, has cut several teeth, and yet never had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear that the 'little floweret' is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the 'mother-plant' is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her 'cruel wounds' be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear farther from,

Madam, Yours, &c.

No. 101.

TO LADY W. M. CONSTABLE.

Acknowledging a Present of a valuable Snuff-box, with a fine Picture of Mary Queen of Scots on the lid.

My Lady,

NOTHING less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm could

have prevented me, the moment I received your ladyship's elegant present by Mrs. Miller, from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your ladyship I shall set it apart: the symbols of religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition, the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of others, I shall recollect your ladyship; when I would interest my fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary.

No. 102.

TO MRS. GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

The poems are to be published by subscription; and it may be possible, I think, to make out a 2s. 6d. or 3s. volume, with the assistance of a few hitherto unpublished verses, which I have got from the mother of the poet.

But the design I have in view in writing to you, is not merely to inform you of these facts, it is to solicit the aid of your name and pen in support of the scheme. The reputation of Bruce is already high with every reader of classical taste, and I shall be anxious to guard against tarnishing his character, by allowing any new poems to appear that may lower it. For this purpose, the MSS. I am in the possession of, have been submitted to the revision of some whose critical talents I can trust to, and I mean still to submit them to others.

either to him or you, would be admitted in that appearance he may make in future.

You have already paid an honourable tribute to kindred genius, in Ferguson—I fondly hope that the mother of Bruce will experience your patronage.

I wish to have the subscription papers circulated by the 14th of March, Bruce's birth-day; which I understand some friends in Scotland talk this year of observing—at that time it will be resolved, I imagine, to place a plain, humble stone over his grave. This at least I trust you will agree to do—to furnish, in a few couplets, an *inscription* for it.

On these points may I solicit an answer as early as possible; a short delay might disappoint us in procuring that relief to the mother, which is the object of the whole.

You will be pleased to address for me under cover to the duke of Athole, London.

.....

P. S. Have you ever seen an engraving published here some time ago from one of your poems, '*O thou pale Orb.*' If you have not, I shall have the pleasure of sending it to you.

No. 104.

TO THE REV. G. BAIRD.

In answer to the foregoing.

WHY did you, my dear Sir, write to me in such a hesitating style, on the business of

poor Bruce? Don't I know, and have I not felt, the many ills, the peculiar ills that poetic flesh is heir to? You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have; and had your letter had my direction so as to have reached me sooner, (it only came to my hand this moment) I should have directly put you out of suspence on the subject. I only ask, that some prefatory advertisement in the book, as well as the subscription bills, may bear, that the publication is solely for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would not put it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. I have such a host of peccadilloes, failings, follies, and backslidings, (any body but myself might perhaps give some of them a worse

you are, the inclosed poem will not be altogether new to you. Captain Grose did me the favour to send me a dozen copies of the proof-sheet, of which this is one. Should you have read the piece before, still this will answer the principal end I have in view: it will give me another opportunity of thanking you for all your goodness to the rustic bard; and also of shewing you, that the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronize are still employed in the way you wish.

The *Elegy on Captain Henderson*, is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have in this the same advantage as Roman Catholics; they can be of no service to their friends after they have past that bourn where all other kindness ceases to be of any avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead, is, I fear, very problematical; but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living: and as a very orthodox text, I forget where in scripture, says, 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin;" so say I, Whatsoever is not detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankful delight. As almost all my religious tenets originate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea, that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly beloved friend, or still more dearly beloved mistress, who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on Queen Mary was begun while I was busy with *Percy's Reliques of English Poetry*. By the way, how much is every honest heart,

which has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice, obliged to you for your glorious story of Buchanan and Targe. 'Twas an unequivocal proof of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving Targe the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.

* * * * * * * * *

I have just read over, once more of many times, your *Zeluco*. I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one, or two I think, which, with humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart, is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson indeed might perhaps be excepted; but unhappily, his *dramatis personæ*, are beings of some other world; and however they may captivate the unexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper minds.

As to my private concerns, I am going on, a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the earl of Glencairn; the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of

my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence; so soon as the prince's friends had got in, (and every dog you know has his day) my getting forward in the excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though this was a consummation devoutly to be wished, yet, thank Heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am; and as to my boys, poor little fellows! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life, as I could wish, I shall, if I am favoured so much of the Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors, this is one of the best, *Better be the head o' the commonality, as the tail o' the gentry.*

But I am got on a subject, which, however interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you; so I shall give you a short poem on the other page, and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honour to be, Yours, &c.

.....

Written on the blank leaf of a book, which I presented to a very young lady, whom I had formerly characterised under the denomination of *The Rose-bud.* *See poems, p. 234.*

No. 106.

FROM DR. MOORE.

London, 29th March, 1791.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter of the 28th of February I received only two days ago, and this day I had the pleasure of waiting on the Rev. Mr. Baird, at the duke of Athole's, who had been so obliging as to transmit it to me, with the printed verses on *Alloa Church*, the *Elegy on Captain Henderson*, and the *Epitaph*. There are many poetical beauties in the former: what I particularly admire are the three striking similies from

'Or like the snow-falls in the river,'

and the eight lines which begin with

'By this time he was cross the ford,'*

so exquisitely expressive of the superstitious impressions of the country. And the twenty-two lines from

'Coffins stood round like open presses,'

which, in my opinion, are equal to the ingredients of Shakespeare's cauldron in *Macbeth*.

As for the *Elegy*, the chief merit of it consists in the very graphical description of the objects belonging to the country in which the poet writes, and which none but a Scottish poet could have

* See poems, p. 226.

described, and none but a real poet, and a close observer of Nature could have so described.

* * * * * * * * *

There is something original and to me wonderfully pleasing in the *Epitaph*.

I remember you once hinted before, what you repeat in your last, that you had made some remarks on *Zeluco*, on the margin. I should be very glad to see them, and regret you did not send them before the last edition, which is just published. Pray transcribe them for me; I sincerely value your opinion very highly, and pray do not suppress one of those in which you *censure* the sentiment or expression. Trust me it will make no squares between us—I am not akin to the Bishop of Grenada.

I must now mention what has been on my mind for some time: I cannot help thinking you imprudent, in scattering abroad so many copies of your verses. It is most natural to give a few to confidential friends, particularly to those who are connected with the subject, or who are perhaps themselves the subject, but this ought to be done under promise not to give other copies. Of the poem you sent me on Queen Mary, I refused every solicitation for copies, but I lately saw it in a newspaper. My motive for cautioning you on this subject, is, that I wish to engage you to collect all your fugitive pieces, not already printed, and after they have been re-considered, and polished to the utmost of your power, I would have you publish them by another subscription: in promoting of which, I will exert myself with pleasure.

In your future compositions, I wish you would use the modern English. You have shewn your powers in Scottish sufficiently. Although in certain subjects it gives additional zest to the humour, yet it is lost to the English; and why should you write only for a part of the island, when you can command the admiration of the whole.

If you chance to write to my friend Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop, I beg to be affectionately remembered to her. She must not judge of the warmth of my sentiments respecting her by the number of my letters; I hardly ever write a line but on business; and I do not know that I should have scribbled all this to you, but for the business part, that is, to instigate you to a new publication, and to tell you, that when you think you have a sufficient number to make a volume, you should set your friends on getting subscriptions. I wish

No. 107.

TO THE REV. ARCH. ALISON.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 14th Feb. 1791.

SIR,

YOU must, by this time, have set me
n as one of the most ungrateful of men. You
ne the honour to present me with a book
h does honour to science and the intellectual
rs of man, and I have not even so much as
owledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you
elf are to blame for it. Flattered as I was
our telling me that you wished to have my
on of the work, the old spiritual enemy of
kind, who knows well that vanity is one of
ins that most easily beset me, put it into my
. to ponder over the performance with the
-out of a critic, and to draw up forsooth a
learned digest of strictures, on a composition,
hich, in fact, until I read the book, I did not
know the first principles. I own, Sir, that
st glance, several of your propositions startled
is paradoxical. That the martial clangour of
mpet had something in it vastly more grand,
ic, and sublime, than the twingle twangle of
r's-harp; that the delicate flexture of the rose-
, when the half-blown flower is heavy with
ears of the dawn, was infinitely more beauti-
nd elegant than the upright stub of a burdock;
that from something innate and independent
l association of ideas;—these I had set down

as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith.—In short, Sir, except *Euclid's Elements of Geometry*, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fire-side, in the winter evening of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas as your '*Essays on the Principles of Taste.*' One thing, Sir, you must forgive my mentioning, as an uncommon merit in the work, I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I inclose you some poetic bagatelles of my late composition. The one in print is my first essay in the way of telling a tale.

that inebriates the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication, and leaves the poor patient, as usual, with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced, in the revolution of many a hymeneal honey-moon. But lest I sink into stupid prose, and so sacrilegiously intrude on the office of my parish priest, I shall fill up the page in my own way, and give you another song of my late composition, which will appear perhaps in Johnson's work, as well as the former.

You must know a beautiful Jacobite air, *There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.* When political combustion ceases to be the object of princes and patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of historians and poets.

'By yon castle wa' at the close of the day,'

See poems, p. 503.

If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you would oblige me, if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to 'the memory of joys that are past,' to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure. But I have scribbled on till I hear the clock has intimated the near approach of

'That hour o' night's black arch the key-stane.'—

so good night to you! Sound be your sleep, and delectable your dreams! Apropos, how do you like this thought in a ballad, I have just now on the tapis?

I look to the west, when I gae to rest,
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;
For far in the west, is he I lo'e best,
The lad that is dear to my babie and me!

Good night, once more, and God bless you!

No. 109.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 11th April, 1791.

I AM once more able, my honoured friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster, that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered—joy and sorrow—for on Saturday morning last Mrs. Burns made me a present of a fine boy; rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed I look on your little namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on *Tam o' Shanter* to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery, that might perhaps be as well spared; but then they also shew, in my opinion, a force of genius, and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to day at breakfast, as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly

cher petit Monsieur comes on with his sma
May almighty goodness preserve and restor

No. 110.

TO ——————

DEAR SIR,

I AM exceedingly to blame in no
ting you long ago; but the truth is, that
the most indolent of all human beings; and
I matriculate in the herald's office, I inten
my supporters shall be two sloths, my crest a
worm, and the motto, 'Deil tak the fore
So much by way of apology for not thankin
sooner for your kind execution of my comm

with this. He is a Mr. Clarke, of Moffat, principal schoolmaster there, and is at present suffering severely under the * * * * * * of one or two powerful individuals of his employers. He is accused of harshness to * * * * that were placed under his care. God help the teacher, if a man of sensibility and genius, and such is my friend Clarke, when a booby father presents him with his booby son, and insists on lighting up the rays of science, in a fellow's head whose skull is impervious and inaccessible by any other way than a positive fracture with a cudgel: a fellow whom in fact it savours of impiety to attempt making a scholar of, as he has been marked a blockhead in the book of fate, at the almighty fiat of his Creator.

The patrons of Moffat school are, the ministers, magistrates, and town-council of Edinburgh; and as the business now comes before them, let me beg my dearest friend to do every thing in his power to serve the interests of a man of genius and worth, and a man whom I particularly respect and esteem. You know some good fellows among the magistracy and council, * * * * * * * * * * * * * but particularly you have much to say with a reverend gentleman to whom you have the honour of being very nearly related, and whom this country and age have had the honour to produce. I need not name the historian of Charles V.* I tell him, through the medium of his nephew's influence, that Mr. Clarke is a gentleman who will not disgrace even his patronage. I know the merits of the cause thoroughly, and

* Dr. Robertson was uncle to Mr. Cunningham.

say that my friend is falling a sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance, and ******. God help the children of dependence! Hated and persecuted by their enemies, and too often alas! almost unexceptionably, received by their friends with disrespect and reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O! to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his deserts, rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for a subsistence, precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature! Every man has his virtues, and no man is without his failings; and curse on that privileged plain dealing of friendship, which, in the hour of my calamity, cannot reach forth the helping hand without at the same time pointing out these failings, and apportioning them their share in procuring my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls ye, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues if you please, but do, also, spare my follies: the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain

No. 112.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

My Lord,

LANGUAGE sinks under the ardour of my feelings when I would thank your lordship for the honour you have done me in inviting me to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson. In my first enthusiasm, in reading the card you did me the honour to write me, I overlooked every obstacle, and determined to go; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two's absence, in the very middle of my harvest, is what I much doubt I dare not venture on.

Your lordship hints at an ode for the occasion: but who would write after Collins? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired.—I got indeed to the length of three or four stanzas, in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your lordship with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your lordship, and declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honour to be, &c.

* * * * * *

No. 113.

FROM THE SAME.

Dryburgh Abbey, 16th Sept. 1791.

SIR,

YOUR address to the shade of Thomson s been well received by the public; and though hould disapprove of your allowing Pegasus to e with you off the field of your honourable and ful profession, yet I cannot resist an impulse ich I feel at this moment to suggest to your se, *Harvest Home*, as an excellent subject for grateful song, in which the peculiar aspect l manners of our country might furnish an ex- ent portrait and landscape of Scotland, for the ployment of happy moments of leisure and re- s, from your more important occupations.

Your *Halloween*, and *Saturday Night*, will re- in to distant posterity as interesting pictures of al innocence and happiness in your native ntry, and were happily written in the dialect he people; but *Harvest Home* being suited to riptive poetry, except where colloquial may pe the disguise of a dialect which admits of no ance or dignity of expression. Without the stance of any god or goddess, and without the ocation of any foreign muse, you may convey epistolary form the description of a scene so ddening and picturesque, with all the con- nitant local position, landscape and costume, trasting the peace, improvement and happiness

of the borders, of the once hostile nations of Britain, with their former oppression and misery, and showing in lively and beautiful colours, the beauties and joys of a rural life. And as the unvitiated heart is naturally disposed to overflow in gratitude in the moment of prosperity, such a subject would furnish you with an amiable opportunity of perpetuating the names of Glencairn, Miller, and your other eminent benefactors; which from what I know of your spirit, and have seen of your poems and letters, will not deviate from the chastity of praise, that is so uniformly united to true taste and genius.

I am, Sir, &c.

No. 114.

TO LADY E. CUNNINGHAM.

My Lady,

I WOULD, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed me, of sending you any thing I compose in my poetical way; but as I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my late banefactor, I determined to make that the first piece I should do myself the honour of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardour of my heart, the inclosed had been much more worthy your perusal: as it is, I beg leave to lay it at your

ladyship's feet. As all the world knows my obligations to the late earl of Glencairn, I would wish to shew as openly that my heart glows, and shall ever glow, with the most grateful sense and remembrance of his lordship's goodness. The sables I did myself the honour to wear to his lordship's memory, were not the 'mockery of woe.' Nor shall my gratitude perish with me;—If, among my children, I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honour, and a family debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn!

I was about to say, my lady, that if you think the poem may venture to see the light, I would, in some way or other, give it to the world.*

* * * * * *

No. 115.

TO MR. AINSLIE.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,

CAN you minister to a mind diseased? can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, head-ache, nausea, and all the rest of the d—d hounds of hell, that beset a poor wretch, who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul?

Miserable perdu that I am, I have tried every thing that used to amuse me, but in vain: here

* The poem enclosed, is '*The Lament for James, earl of Glencairn.*'—*See poems, p. 220.*

must I sit, a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every chick of the clock as it slowly—slowly, numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours, who, d—n them, are ranked up before me, every one at his neighbour's backside, and every one with a burden of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me. My wife scolds me! my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow.—When I tell you, even * * * has lost its power to please, you will guess something of my hell within, and all around me—I began *Elibanks and Elibraes*, but the stanzas fell unenjoyed, and unfinished from my listless tongue: at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours, that lay by me in my book case, and I felt something, for

No. 116.

FROM SIR JOHN WHITEFORD.

Near Maybole, 16th Oct. 1791.

SIR,

ACCEPT of my thanks for your favour, with the *Lament* on the death of my much esteemed friend, and your worthy patron, the perusal of which pleased and affected me much. The lines addressed to me are very flattering.

I have always thought it most natural to suppose, (and a strong argument in favour of a future existence), that when we see an honourable and virtuous man, labouring under bodily infirmities, and oppressed by the frowns of fortune in this world, that there was a happier state beyond the grave; where that worth and honour, which were neglected here, would meet with their just reward, and where temporal misfortunes would receive an eternal recompense. Let us cherish this hope for our departed friend; and moderate our grief for that loss we have sustained; knowing that he cannot return to us, but we may go to him.

Remember me to your wife, and with every good wish for the prosperity of you and your family, believe me, at all times,

Your most sincere friend,

JOHN WHITEFORD.

No. 117.

FROM A. F. TYTLER, ESQ.

Edinburgh, 27th Nov. 1791.

DEAR SIR,

YOU have much reason to blame me for neglecting till now to acknowledge the receipt of a most agreeable packet, containing *The Whistle*, a ballad; and *The Lament*; which reached me about six weeks ago in London, from whence I am just returned. Your letter was forwarded to me there from Edinburgh, where, as I observed by the date, it had lain for some days. This was an additional reason for me to have answered it immediately on receiving it; but the truth was, the bustle of business, engagements, and confusion of one kind or another, in which I found myself immersed all the time I was in London, absolutely put it out of my power. But to have done with apologies, let me now endeavour to prove myself in some degree deserving of the very flattering compliment you pay me, by giving you at least a frank and a candid, if it should not be a judicious criticism, on the poems you sent me.

The ballad of *The Whistle* is, in my opinion, truly excellent. The old tradition which you have taken up, is the best adapted for a Bacchanalian composition of any I have ever met with, and you have done it full justice. In the first place, the strokes of wit arise naturally from the

own person, to have expressed your genuine feelings for his loss, and to have spoken the language of nature rather than that of fiction on the subject. Compare this with your poem of the same title in your printed volume, which begins, *O thou pale Orb!* and observe what it is that forms the charm of that composition. It is, that it speaks the language of *truth* and of *nature.* The change is, in my opinion, injudicious too in this respect, that an *aged* bard has much less need of a patron and protector than a *young* one. I have thus given you, with much freedom, my opinion of both the pieces. I should have made a very ill return to the compliment you paid me, if I had given you any other than my genuine sentiments.

It will give me great pleasure to hear from you when you find leisure, and I beg you will believe

re is charmed into the torpor of the bat, slumbering out the rigours of winter in the chink of a ruined wall. Nothing less, madam, could have made me so long neglect your obliging commands. Indeed I had one apology—the bagatelle was not worth presenting. Besides, so strongly am I interested in Miss D——'s fate and welfare in the serious business of life, amid its chances and changes; that to make her the subject of a silly ballad, is downright mockery of these ardent feelings; 'tis like an impertinent jest to a dying friend.

Gracious Heaven, why this disparity between our wishes and our powers? Why is the most generous wish to make others blest, impotent and ineffectual—as the idle breeze that crosses the pathless desert? In my walks of life I have met with a few people to whom how gladly would I have said—'Go, be happy. I know that your hearts have been wounded by the scorn of the proud, whom accident has placed above you—or worse still, in whose hands are perhaps placed many of the comforts of your life. But there ascend that rock, Independence, and look justly down on their littleness of soul. Make the worthless tremble under your indignation, and the foolish sink before your contempt, and largely impart that happiness to others which I am certain will give yourselves so much pleasure to bestow.'

Why, dear Madam, must I wake from this delightful reverie, and find it all a dream? Why, amid my generous enthusiasm, must I find myself poor and powerless, incapable of wiping one tear from the eye of pity, or of adding one comfort to the friend I love—but upon the world

say I, that its affairs are administered so ill! They talk of reform;—good Heaven! what a reform would I make among the sons, and even the daughters of men!---Down, immediately, should go fools from the high places where misbegotten chance has perked them up, and through life should they skulk, ever haunted by their native insignificance, as the body marches accompanied by its shadow.---As for a much more formidable class, the knaves, I am at a loss what to do with them: Had I a world, there should not be a knave in it.

* * * * * *

But the hand that could give, I would liberally fill; and I would pour delight on the heart that could kindly forgive, and generously love.

Still the inequalities of life are, among men, comparatively tolerable---but there is a delicacy, a

No. 119.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th December, 1791.

MANY thanks to you, Madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard, and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs. Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in every thing but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song, which to a lady the descendant of Wallace and many heroes of his truly illustrious line, and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

Here follows The Song of Death.—*See poems, p. 505.*

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was, looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled *Oran an Aoig*, or, *The Song of Death*, to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces, which, ere yon full-orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at old mother earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall

find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commende!*

No. 120.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

5th January, 1792.

YOU see my hurried life, Madam; I can only command starts of time: however I am glad of one thing; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is over-blown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham, for the board had made me the subject of their animadversions: and now I have the pleasure of informing you, that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to —— but hold! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall a swearing in this.

Alas! how little do the wantonly or idly officious think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence, or thoughtless blabbings. What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness—in all the charities and all the virtues; between one class of human beings and another. For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of D——, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated, dignified minds—their informed and polished understandings—what a contrast, when compared—if

ladies, than you do for the herd of animals called young gentlemen. To you—who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of fashion, as an idiot painter that seems industrious to place staring fools and unprincipled knaves in the foreground of his picture, while men of sense and honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs. Riddel, who will take this letter to town with her and send it to you, is a character that, even in your own way, as a naturalist and a philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The lady too is a votary of the muses; and as I think myself somewhat of a judge in my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct, and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the *lady-poetesses* of the day. She is a great admirer of your book, and hearing me say that I was acquainted with you, she begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian capital. I told her that her best way was, to desire her near relation, and your intimate friend, Craigdarrock, to have you at his house while she was there; and lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the lady's merits, she has one unlucky failing; a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will as easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself;---where she dislikes or de-

spises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it, than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you with the unmeaning *compliments of the season*, but I will send you my warmest wishes and most ardent prayers, that FORTUNE may never throw your SUBSISTENCE to the mercy of a KNAVE, or set your CHARACTER on the judgment of a FOOL; but that upright and erect, you may walk to an honest grave, where men of letters shall say, Here lies a man who did honour to science; and men of worth shall say, Here lies a man who did honour to human nature.

No. 122.

TO MR. W. NICOL.

20th February, 1792.

O THOU, wisest among the wise, meridian blaze of prudence, full moon of discretion, and chief of many counsellors! How infinitely is thy puddled-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration, may it be my

portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that father of proverbs and master of maxims, that antipode of folly, and magnet among the sages, the wise and witty Willie Nichol! Amen! Amen! Yes, so be it!

For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon, to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say, when shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills?* As for him, his works are perfect: never did the pen of calumny blur the fair page of his reputa-

Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid.—May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for, O thou lamp of wisdom and mirror of morality! thy devoted slave.*

No. 123.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

3d March, 1792.

SINCE I wrote to you the last lugubrious sheet, I have not had time to write you farther. When I say that I had not time, that, as usual means, that the three demons, indolence, business, and ennui, have so completely shared my hours among them, as not to leave me a five minutes fragment to take up a pen in.

Thank heaven, I feel my spirits buoying upwards with the renovating year. Now I shall in good earnest take up Thomson's songs. I dare say he thinks I have used him unkindly, and I must own with too much appearance of truth. Apropos, do you know the much admired old Highland air called *The Sutor's Dochter?* It is a first rate favourite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it to you, as it was sung with great applause in some fashionable circles, by Major Robertson, of Lude, who was here with his corps.

* * * * * *

* This strain of irony was excited by a letter of Mr. Nicol, containing good advice.

There is one commission that I must trouble you with. I lately lost a valuable seal, a present from a departed friend, which vexes me much. I have gotten one of your Highland pebbles, which I fancy would make a very decent one; and I want to cut my armorial bearing on it; will you be so obliging as enquire what will be the expence of such a business? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all; but I have invented arms for myself, so you know I shall be chief of the name; and by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These however I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald; and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly bush, seeded, proper, in base; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colours, a wood-lark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes: round the top of the crest, *Wood notes wild;* at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, *Better a wee bush than nae bield.* By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters of Arcadia, but a *Stock and Horn*, and a *Club*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the *Gentle Shepherd*. By the by, do you know Allan? He must be a man of very great genius---Why is he not more known?---Has he no patrons? or do 'Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy' on him? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of that noblest pastoral in the world; and dear as it was, I mean, dear as to my pocket, I would have bought it; but I was

told that it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the *only* artist who has hit *genuine* pastoral *costume*. What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and harden the heart so? I think that were I as rich as the sun, I should be as generous as the day; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than any other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a bird-lime quality to the possessor, at which the man, in his native poverty, would have revolted. What has led me to this, is the idea of such merit as Mr. Allan possesses, and such riches as a nabob or governor contractor possesses, and why they do not form a mutual league. Let wealth shelter and cherish unprotected merit, and the gratitude and celebrity of that merit will richly repay it.

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No. 124.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Annan Water Foot, 22d August, 1792.

DO not blame me for it, Madam---my own conscience, hacknied and weatherbeaten as it is, in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indolence, &c. has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently.

* * * * * *

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for

many favours; to esteem for much worth, and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now old acquaintance, and I hope and am sure of progressive increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much loved friend and her wide-scattered connections, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can.

Apropos, (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain) do you know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours?—Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word, Love, owing to the *intermingledoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and

horse, (though God knows I could ill spare the time) and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad, beginning with

'My bonnie Lizie Bailie
'I'll rowe thee in my plaidie,' &c.

So I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, 'unanointed unannealed,' as Hamlet says.

'O saw ye bonnie Lesley,' &c.—*See poems, p. 390.*

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people, who would be the happier the oftener they met together, are, almost without exception, always so placed as never to meet but once or twice a year; which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great 'evil under the sun,' which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that, 'we meet to part no more.'

* * * * * *

'Tell us, ye dead,
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be!'

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. 'O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!' but it cannot be; you and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary, by making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little godson, and every little creature that shall call me father, shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labour of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua.

No. 125.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Dumfries, 10th September, 1792.

NO! I will not attempt an apology.—Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the excise; making ballads, and then drinking and singing them; and, over and above all, the correcting the press-work of two different publications; still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends

creatures. I might have done, as I do
snatching an hour near 'witching time
and scrawled a page or two. I might
atulated my friend on his marriage; or
ve thanked the Caledonian archers for
: they have done me, (though to do
:ice, I intended to have done both in
: I had done both long ere now). Well
is to your good health! for you must
ve set a nipperkin of toddy by me, just
spell, to keep away the meikle horned
y of his subaltern imps who may be on
ly rounds.
at shall I write to you?—'The voice
and I said, 'What shall I cry?'—O,
! whatever thou art, or wherever thou
yself visible! be thou a bogle by the
of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen
hich the herd-callan maun bicker in his
ute frae the fauld! Be thou a brownie,
l of night, to thy task, by the blazing
1 the solitary barn, where the repercus-
y iron flail half affright thyself, as thou
the work of twenty of the sons of men,
:k-crowing summon thee to thy ample
stantial brose—Be thou a kelpie, haunt-
d or ferry, in the starless night, mixing
ng yell with the howling of the storm
aring of the flood, as thou viewest the
miseries of man on the foundering horse,
tumbling boat!—Or, lastly, be thou a
'ing thy nocturnal visits to the hoary
lecayed grandeur; or performing thy
es in the shadow of the time-worn

church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent, ghastly dwellings of the dead around thee; or taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, pourtraying on his dreaming fancy, pictures, dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed Deity!—Come, thou spirit, but not in these horrid forms; come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations, which thou breathest round the wig of a prating advocate, or the tête of a tea-sipping gossip, while their tongues run at the light-horse gallop of clishmaclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil, who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half a hundred words; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark worth putting pen to paper for.

thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! and below, an inescapable and inexorable hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals!!!'—O doctrine! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of man! Ye sons and daughters of affliction, ye *pauvres miserables*, to whom day brings no pleasure, and night yields no rest, be comforted! ''Tis but *one* to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will amend in this world;' so, alas! the experience of the poor and the needy too often affirms; and 'tis nineteen hundred thousand to *one*, by the dogmas of ***** ***, that you will be damned eternally in the world to come!

But of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the bye, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful: but still your children of sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril snuffing putrescence, and a foot spurning filth, in short, with a conceited dignity that your titled * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * or any other of your Scottish lordlings of seven centuries standing, display when they accidentally mix among the many aproned sons of mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave.—How ignorant are plough-boys!—Nay, I have since discovered that

a *godly woman* may be a *****!—But hol
Here's t'ye again—this rum is generous Antig
so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

Apropos, how do you like, I mean *really*
the married life? Ah! my friend, matrimon
quite a different thing from what your love-
youths and sighing girls take it to be! But
riage, we are told, is appointed by God, an
shall never quarrel with any of his institutions.
am a husband of older standing than you,
shall give you *my* ideas of the conjugal s
(*En passant*, you know I am no Latinist, is
conjugal derived from *jugum*, a yoke?) W
then, the scale of good wifeship I divide into
parts.—Good-nature, four; Good Sense, t
Wit, one; Personal Charms, viz. a sweet
eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage,
would add a fine waist too, but that is so

an unequalled display of them—how, in galloping home at night, I made a ballad on her, of which these two stanzas make a part—

Thou, bonnie L——, art a queen,
Thy subjects we before thee;
Thou, bonnie L——, art divine,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The very Deil he could na scathe
Whatever wad belang thee!
He'd look into thy bonnie face
And say, 'I canna wrang thee.'

—Behold, all these things are written in the chronicles of my imaginations, and shall be read by thee, my dear friend, and by thy beloved spouse, my other dear friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee, and to thy before-designed *bosom-companion*, be given the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things brought forth by the moon, and the benignest influences of the stars, and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life, and by the tree of life, for ever and ever! Amen!

No. 126.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 24th Sep. 1792.

I HAVE this moment, my dear Madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind

reproaches, your news, &c. are out of my
when I read and think on Mrs. H——'s sit
Good God! a heart-wounded helpless youn
man—in a strange, foreign land, and tha
convulsed with every horror that can harr
human feelings—sick—looking, longing for
forter, but finding none—a mother's feelin
—but it is too much: He who wounded (H
can) may He heal!*

* * * * * *

I wish the farmer great joy of his new a
tion to his family. * * * * * * * * *
not say that I give him joy of his life as a f
'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconsci
rent, a *cursed life!* As to a laird farmi
own property; sowing his own corn in hop
reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in

on the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to shew a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor; a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos, your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory, and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we got into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart: you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

No. 127.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Supposed to have been written on the Death of Mrs. H——, her daughter.

I HAD been from home, and did not receive your letter until my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much-afflicted friend! I can but grieve with you; consolation I have none to offer, except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction—*children of affliction!*—how just the expression! and like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see, and feel in a serious, all important manner, of which the world

has not, nor cares to have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, Madam! who would wish for many years' what is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire, and leave us in a night of misery: like the gloom which blots out the stars one by one, from the face of night, and leaves us, without a ray of comfort, in the howling waste!

I am interrupted, and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

No. 128.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 6th Dec. 1792.

sion for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different individuals? Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life, more than another? A few years ago, I could have lain down in the dust, 'careless of the voice of the morning;' and now not a few, and these most helpless individuals, would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their 'staff and shield.' By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition; Mrs. B—— having given me a fine girl since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora*,

'The valiant, *in himself*, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes.' &c.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly, alas, too peculiarly opposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind;

'Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
Glad o'er the summer main? the tempest comes,
The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
Lamenting—Heaven! if privileged from trial,
How cheap a thing were virtue!'

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favourite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive, or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favourite one, from his *Alfred*.

'Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life; to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose.'

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination; so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into one another; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is religion—speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says,

'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,' &c.
as in p. 167.

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t'other sheet. We in this country here, have many alarms of the reforming, or rather the republican spirit, of your part of the kingdom. Indeed we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am *a placeman*, you know; a very

No. 129.

TO MISS B*****, OF YORK.

21st March, 1793.

MADAM,

AMONG many things for which I envy those hale, long-lived old fellows before the flood, is this in particular, that when they met with any body after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now, in this short, stormy, winter day of our fleeting existence, when you now and then, in the Chapter of Accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you, that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as this miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it, that if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill-run of the chances shall be so against you, that in the overtakings, turning, and jostlings of life, pop, at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's repose. As I am a sturdy believer in the powers of darkness, I take these to be the doings of that old author of mischief, the devil. It is well known that he has some kind of short-hand way of taking down our thoughts, and I make no doubt that he is perfectly acquainted

with my sentiments, respecting Miss B——; how much I admired her abilities and valued her worth, and how very fortunate I thought myself in her acquaintance. For this last reason, my dear Madam, I must entertain no hopes of the very great pleasure of meeting with you again.

Miss H—— tells me that she is sending a packet to you, and I beg leave to send you the inclosed sonnet, though, to tell you the real truth, the sonnet is a mere pretence, that I may have the opportunity of declaring with how much respectful esteem I have the honour to be, &c.

No. 130.

TO MISS C****.

lent for poetry; none ever despised it who had etensions to it. The fates and characters of the yming tribe often employ my thoughts when I n disposed to be melancholy. There is not ong all the martyrologies that ever were pen-d, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the cri-rion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but w they are formed to bear. Take a being of r kind, give him a stronger imagination and a ore delicate sensibility, which between them will er engender a more ungovernable set of passions an are the usual lot of man; implant in him an resistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as, ranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, acing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirp-g song, watching the frisks of the little minnows the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some ursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the ths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener lish than any man living for the pleasures that re can purchase; lastly, fill up the measure of s woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of s own dignity, and you have created a wight rly as miserable as a poet. To you, Madam, need not recount the fairy pleasures the muse stows to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. witching poetry is like bewitching woman; she s in all ages been accused of misleading mankind m the counsels of wisdom and the paths of pru-nce, involving them in difficulties, baiting them th poverty, branding them with infamy, and nging them in the whirling vortex of ruin;

yet, where is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worthy the name—that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisaical bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun, rising over a frozen region, compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures that we owe to the lovely Queen of the heart of Man!

No. 131.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

December, 1793.

SIR,

IT is said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, and I pay myself a very high compliment in the manner in which I am going to apply the remark. I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man.—Here is Ker's account, and here are six guineas; and now, I don't owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these damned dirty, dog's-ear'd little pages,* I had done myself the honour to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under; the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itself was fully as much as I could ever make head against; but to owe you money too, was more than I could face.

* Scottish Bank Notes.

Of fleet ideas, never join'd before,
Where lively *wit* excites to gay surprise;
Or folly-painting *humour*, grave himself,
Calls laughter forth, deep-shaking every nerve.'

But as you rejoice with them that do rejoice, do also remember to weep with them that weep, and pity your melancholy friend.

No. 133.

To a Lady in favour of a Player's Benefit.

MADAM,

YOU were so very good as to promise me to honour my friend with your presence on his benefit-night. That night is fixed for Friday

loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent *mausoleums*, with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor honest heart happy!

But I crave your pardon, Madam; I came to beg, not to preach.

No. 134.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

TO MR. ——.

1794.

I AM extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests, in a letter which Mr. S*** shewed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisor's list; and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed *of course*—then, a Friend might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about a hundred and twenty, to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a compleat bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor in the common routine, I may be nominated on the Collector's list; and this is always a business purely of politi-

cal patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list, and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. —It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me, to say that I do not need or would not be indebted to a political friend: at the same time, Sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I will petition your goodness with the same frankness and sincerity as I now do myself the honour to subscribe myself, &c.

No. 135.

TO MRS. R*****.

DEAR MADAM,

I MEANT to have called on you yesternight, but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view, was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon, guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my weather-beaten

rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday; when we may arrange the business of the visit.

* * * * * *

Among the profusion of idle compliments, which insidious craft, or unmeaning folly, incessantly offer at your shrine—a shrine, how far exalted above such adoration—permit me, were it but for rarity's sake, to pay you the honest tribute of a warm heart and an independent mind; and to assure you, that I am, thou most amiable, and most accomplished of thy sex, with the most respectful esteem, and fervent regard, thine, &c.

No. 136.

TO THE SAME.

I WILL wait on you, my ever valued friend, but whether in the morning I am not sure. Sunday closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a species of the human genus that I call *the gin-horse class:* what enviable dogs they are. Round, and round, and round they go,—Mundell's ox, that drives his cotton mill, is their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a d—— melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to

passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild finch, caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he foretold—'And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!' If my resentment is awakened, it is sure to be where it dare not squeak: and if—

* * * * * *

Pray that wisdom and bliss be more frequent visitors of

R. B.

No. 137.

If it is true that 'offences come only from the heart,' before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you, as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of friendly confidence, *now* to find cold neglect, and contemptuous scorn—is a wrench that my heart can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of miserable good luck; that while *de-haut-en-bas* rigour may depress an unoffending wretch to the ground, it has a tendency to rouse a stubborn something in his bosom, which, though it cannot heal the wounds of his soul, is at least an opiate to blunt their poignancy.

With the profoundest respect for your abilities; the most sincere esteem, and ardent regard, for your gentle heart and amiable manners; and the most fervent wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and bliss, I have the honour to be, Madam, your most devoted humble servant.

No. 140.

TO JOHN SYME, ESQ.

YOU know that, among other high dignities, you have the honour to be my supreme court of critical judicature, from which there is no appeal. I inclose you a song which I composed since I saw you, and I am going to give you the history of it. Do you know that among much

that I admire in the characters and manners of those great folks whom I have now the honour to call my acquaintances, the O***** family, there is nothing charms me more than Mr. O's unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman. Did you ever, my dear Syme, meet with a man who owed more to the Divine Giver of all good things than Mr. O? A fine fortune; a pleasing exterior; self-evident amiable dispositions, and an ingenuous upright mind, and that informed too much beyond the usual run of young fellows of his rank and fortune: and to all this, such a woman!—but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying any thing adequate: in my song, I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings, on seeing, in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Lucy. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I, in my first fervour, thought of sending it to Mrs. O——; but on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect, might, from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification, or other of that servility which my soul abhors.*

* The song inclosed was 'O wat ye wha's in yon town. *See Poems, p.* 485.

No. 141.

TO MISS ——.

MADAM,

NOTHING short of a kind of absolute necessity could have made me trouble you with this letter. Except my ardent and just esteem for your sense, taste, and worth, every sentiment arising in my breast, as I put pen to paper to you, is painful. The scenes I have past with the friend of my soul, and his amiable connections! The wrench at my heart to think that he is gone, for ever gone from me, never more to meet in the wanderings of a weary world! and the cutting re-

I have a favour to request of you, Madam; and f your sister Mrs. ——, through your means. You know that at the wish of my late friend, I nade a collection of all my trifles in verse which had ever written. They are many of them local, ome of them puerile and silly, and all of them nfit for the public eye. As I have some little ume at stake, a fame that I trust may live, when he hate of those who 'watch for my halting,' and he contumelious sneer of those whom accident as made my superiors, will, with themselves, be one to the regions of oblivion; I am uneasy now r the fate of those manuscripts.—Will Mrs. —— ave the goodness to destroy them, or return em to me? As a pledge of friendship they were estowed; and that circumstance indeed was all eir merit. Most unhappily for me, that merit ey no longer possess, and I hope that Mrs. ——'s oodness, which I well know, and ever will re- ere, will not refuse this favour to a man whom he once held in some degree of estimation.

With the sincerest esteem I have the honour to e, Madam, &c.

No. 142.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

25th February, 1794.

CANST thou minister to a mind dis- sed? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul st on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star

to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame, tremblingly alive as the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries, with thy inquiries after me?

* * * * * *

For these two months I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these ***** times; losses which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill bear, have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition

yet, I am convinced, original and component
ts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*,
may be allowed the expression, which connect
with, and link us to, those awful obscure
lities—an all powerful and equally beneficent
d; and a world to come, beyond death and the
ve. The first gives the nerve of combat, while
ay of hope beams on the field:—the last pours
e balm of comfort into the wounds which time
n never cure.

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that
u and I ever talked on the subject of religion at
. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of
e crafty FEW, to lead the undiscerning MANY;
at most as an uncertain obscurity, which man-
d can never know any thing of, and with which
y are fools if they give themselves much to do.
r would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion,
more than I would for his want of a musical
. I would regret that he was shut out from
at, to me and to others were such superlative
rces of enjoyment. It is in this point of view,
for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the
d of every child of mine with religion. If my
should happen to be a man of feeling, senti-
nt, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his
yments. Let me flatter myself that this
et little fellow, who is just now running about
desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent,
wing heart; and an imagination, delighted
h the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let
figure him, wandering out in a sweet evening,
nhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing
riance of the spring; himself the while in the

blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift, delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson,

> 'These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God.—The rolling year
> Is full of thee.'

And so on in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn.

These are no ideal pleasures; they are real delights; and I ask what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say, equal to them? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious virtue stamps them for her own; and lays hold on them to bring herself into the

other ladies please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon. O all ye powers of decency and decorum! whisper to them, that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible with me—but—

* * * * * * * * *

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of, Madam, your humble slave.

ates of husband and father, for God knows, they ave many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to ou the anxious, sleepless hours those ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little olks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate; even in all the vigour of manhood as I am, such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock! 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune.—A father on his deathbed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I—but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad—

'O that I had ne'er been married,
I would never had nae care;
Now I've gotten wife and bairns,
They cry, crowdie, evermair.

Crowdie! ance; crowdie! twice;
Crowdie! three times in a day:
An ye, crowdie! ony mair,
Ye'll, crowdie a' my meal away.'

* * * * * * * *

December 24th.

We have had a brilliant theatre here this season; only, as all other business has, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country, *want of cash.* I mention our theatre merely to lug in an occasional *Address*

which I wrote for the benefit night of one of the actresses.*

25th, Christmas Morning.

This, my much loved friend, is a morning of wishes: accept mine—so Heaven hear me, as they are sincere! that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not! In the charming words of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*, 'May the great spirit bear up the weight of thy grey hairs; and blunt the arrow that brings them rest!'

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem? The religion of the *Task*, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature: the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were not you to send me your *Zeluco* in return

a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

No. 145.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, IN LONDON.

Dumfries, 20th Dec. 1795.

I HAVE been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country, and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what is become of you, or whether this may reach you at all.—God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits. Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen, and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poesy, sermon or song. In this last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honour to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English.

.....

December 29th.

Since I began this letter, I have been appointed to act in the capacity of supervisor here, and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form: a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

.....

This is the season (New-year's day is now my date) of wishing; and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life to you be a positive blessing, while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged, is my wish for my own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth, and I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had in early days, religion strongly imprinted on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs to, or what creed he believes; but I look on the man, who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness, superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot

—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a firm prop and sure stay, in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress; and a never-failing anchor of hope, when he looks beyond the grave.

.....

January 12th.

You will have seen our worthy and ingenious friend, the doctor, long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him. I have just been reading over again, I dare say for the hundred and fiftieth time, his *View of Society and Manners*; and still I read it with delight. His humour is perfectly original—it is neither the humour of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of any body but Dr. Moore. By the bye, you have deprived me of *Zeluco*; remember that, when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of my laziness.

He has paid me a pretty compliment, by quoting me in his last publication.*

* * * * * * * *

No. 146.

TO MRS. R*****.

20th January, 1796.

I CANNOT express my gratitude to you for allowing me a longer perusal of *Anacharsis*.

* Edward.

In fact I never met with a book that bewitched me so much; and I as a member of the library must warmly feel the obligation you have laid us under. Indeed to me, the obligation is stronger than to any other individual of our society; as *Anacharsis* is an indispensible desideratum to a son of the muses.

The health you wished me in your morning's card is, I think flown from me for ever. I have not been able to leave my bed to-day till about an hour ago. These wickedly unlucky advertisements I lent (I did wrong), to a friend, and I am ill able to go in quest of him.

The muses have not quite forsaken me. The following detached stanzas I intend to interweave in some disastrous tale of a shepherd.

* * * * * *

apidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the ast duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
  Affliction purifies the visual ray,
Religion hails the drear the untried night,
  That shuts, for ever shuts! life's doubtful day.

No. 148.

TO MRS. R*****.

Who had desired him to go to the Birth-day Assembly on that day to shew his loyalty.

4th June, 1796.

I AM in such miserable health as to be utterly incapable of shewing my loyalty in any way. Rackt as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting like that of Balak to Balaam---'Come curse me Jacob; and come defy me Israel!' So say I---Come curse me that east wind; and come, defy me the north! Would you have me in such circumstances copy you out a love-song?

* * * * * *

I may perhaps see you on Saturday, but I will not be at the ball.---Why should I? 'Man delights not me, nor woman either!' Can you supply me with the song, *Let us all be unhappy together*—do if you can, and oblige *le pauvre miserable*.

R. B.

No. 149.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Brow, Sea-bathing quarters,
7th. July, 1796.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

I RECEIVED yours here this moment.

ciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to £35 stead of £50—What way, in the name of thrift, all I maintain myself and keep a horse in coun- y quarters—with a wife and five children at ome, on £35? I mention this, because I had ntended to beg your utmost interest, and that of ll the friends you can muster, to move our com- nissioners of excise to grant me the full salary.— I dare say you know them all personally. If they lo not grant it me, I must lay my account with n exit truly *en poete*; if I die not of disease, I nust perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs; the other my nemory does not serve me with, and I have no opy here; but I shall be at home soon, when I vill send it you.—Apropos to being at home, Mrs. Burns threatens in a week or two, to add one more o my paternal charge, which, if of the right gen- er, I intend shall be introduced to the world by he respectable designation of *Alexander Cunning- am Burns*. My last was *James Glencairn*, so ou can have no objection to the company of no- ility. Farewell.

No. 150.

TO MRS. BURNS.

Brow, Thursday.

MY DEAREST LOVE,

I DELAYED writing until I could tell ou what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce.

It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and I think has strengthened me; but my appetite is still extremely bad. No flesh nor fish can I swallow: porridge and milk are the only thing I can taste. I am very happy to hear, by Miss Jess Lewars, that you are all well. My very best and kindest compliments to her and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband, R. B.

No. 151.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

12th July, 1796.

MADAM,

No. 152.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, September, 1792.

Sir,

FOR some years past, I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favourite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts, both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so in many instances, is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence, some charming melodies are united to

wards. He had however the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled.

It is probable that the greater part of her letters to him were destroyed by our bard about the time that this last was written. He did not foresee that his own letters to her were to appear in print, nor conceive the disappointment that will be felt, that a few of this excellent lady's have not served to enrich and adorn the collection.

mere nonsense and doggrel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate, as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of *The Cotter's Saturday Night;* and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen. If so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared, and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments, or characteristic verses.—We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me frankly, then, whether

you, I am, with great esteem, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

G. THOMSON.

No. 153.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 16th Sep. 1792.

SIR,

I HAVE just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: 'Deil tak the hindmost,' is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me. You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you, gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers, to approve, or reject, at your pleasure, for your own publication. Apropos! if you are for *English* verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the

song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. *Tweedside! Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate! Ah! Chloris, could I now but sit*, &c. you cannot mend; but such insipid stuff as, *To Fanny fair could I impart*, &c., usually set to *The Mill Mill O*, is a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say, amendments; for I will not alter except where I myself at least think that I amend.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c. would be downright *prostitution of soul!* A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favour. In the rustic phrase of the season, 'Gude speed the wark!'

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

P. S. I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible.

No. 154.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

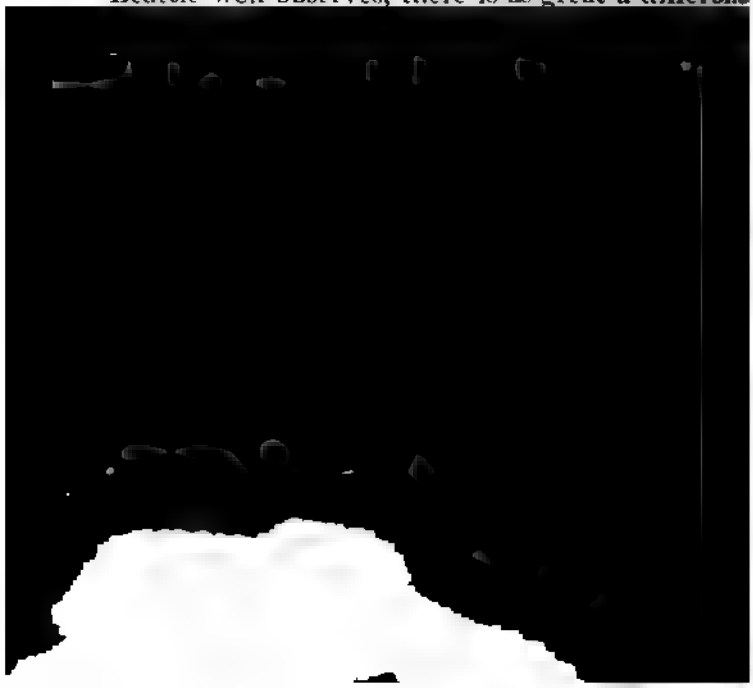
Edinburgh, 13th Oct. 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED, with much satisfaction, your pleasant and obliging letter, and I return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now to doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking *English* verses that have merit, very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year more and more the language of Scotland; but if you mean that no English verses, except those by Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but if we can select a few excellent ones suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air, *My Nannie O*, which in the collections is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, *While some for pleasure pawn their health*, answers so finely to Dr. Percy's beautiful song, *O Nancy wilt thou go with me*,

that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses; you shall freely be allowed a sprinkling of your native tongue, as you elegantly express it; and moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that however gay and sportive the muse may be, she may always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits; simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature but, in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity although between the one and the other, as Dr Beattie well observes, there is as great a differenc



No. 155.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

LET me tell you that you are too fasti- in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own our criticisms are just; the songs you specify ur list have *all, but one,* the faults you re- in them; but who shall mend the matter? shall rise up and say—Go to, I will make a r? For instance, on reading over the *Lea-* I immediately set about trying my hand on d, after all, I could make nothing more of it the following, which Heaven knows is poor gh:—*

ur observation as to the aptitude of Dr. y's ballad to the air *Nanie O,* is just. It is es, perhaps, the most beautiful ballad in the ish language. But let me remark to you, in the sentiment and style of our Scottish there is a pastoral simplicity, a something one may call the Doric style and dialect of music, to which a dash of our native tongue nanners is particularly, nay peculiarly, appo-

For this reason, and, upon my honour, for reason alone, I am of opinion (but, as I told before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to ove, or reject, as you please) that my ballad *Jannie O,* might, perhaps, do for one set of

* Here follows the Lea-rig.—See poems, p. 384.

verses to the tune. Now don't let it enter into your head, that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at, in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Though you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting the other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my *Nannie O*, the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it,

'Behold yon hills where *Lugar* flows.'

Girvin is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but Lugar is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favour, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling, and has nothing of the merits of *Ewe-bughts;* but it will fill up this page. You must know, that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion; and though it might have been easy in after-times to have given them a polish, yet that polish, to me, whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of my heart, which was so faithfully incribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their *race.*

'Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary.'—*See Poems, p.* 389.

Galla Water, and *Auld Rob Morris*, I think, will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on *my verses*, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is, not to stand aloof, the uncomplying bigot of *opiniâtreté*, but cordially to join issue with you in the furtherance of the work.

No. 156.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

November 8th, 1792.

IF you mean my dear Sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first

merit, I am afraid you will find more difficulty in the undertaking than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the *feature notes* of the tune, that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air, *My wife's a wanton wee thing*, if a few lines smooth and pretty can be adapted to it, it is all you can expect. The following were made extempore to it; and though, on farther study, I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this random clink.

'My Wife's a winsome wee thing.'—*See Poems, p. 387.*

.....

No. 157.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

14th November, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AGREE with you that the song, *Katharine Ogie*, is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it, but the awkward sound *Ogie* recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing sentiment into the piece. The foregoing song* pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner; you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air, which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart, that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of *Auld Rob Morris*. I have adopted the two first verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take up one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet-lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what use you choose of the productions. Adieu! &c.

* 'Highland Mary.'—*See Poems, p.* 381.

No. 158.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, November, 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS just going to write to you, that on meeting with your *Nannie* I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you, therefore, for sending the charming rustic to me, in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.

I regret that your song for the *Lea-rig* is so short; the air is easy, soon sung, and very pleasing; so that, if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our medodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very Flowers of English Song, well adapted to those melodies, which in England at least will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But you will observe, my plan is, that every air shall, in the first place, have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs, for the choice of the singer.

What you say of the *Ewe-bughts* is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonnie blythsome wee thing;
Sae lang's I hae my wee thing,
I'll think my lot divine.

Tho' warld's care we share o't,
And may see meikle mair o't,
Wi' her I'll blythly bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.

.....

You perceive, my dear Sir, I avail myself of the liberty which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured, it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see: my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what perhaps you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the re-perusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.

I remain yours faithfully, &c.

P. S. Your verses upon Highland Mary are just come to hand: they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel superadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary: you always seem inspired when you write of her.

No. 159.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 1st December, 1792.

YOUR alterations of my *Nannie O* are feetly right. So are those of *My wife's a wan- wee thing.* Your alteration of the second nza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear , with the freedom which characterizes our respondence, I must not, cannot alter *Bonnie lie.* You are right, the word 'Alexander' kes the line a little uncouth, but I think the ught is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all er heroes, it may be said, in the sublime lan- ge of Scripture, that 'he went forth conquer- ; and to conquer.'

'For nature made her *what she is,*
And never made anither.' (Such a person as she is.)

his is in my opinion more poetical than 'Ne'er le sic anither.' However, it is immaterial: ke it either way.* 'Caledonie,' I agree with , is not so good a word as could be wished, ugh it is sanctioned in three or four instances Allan Ramsay: But I cannot help it. In rt, that species of stanza is the most difficult t I have ever tried.

am interrupted. Yours, &c.'

* Mr. Thomson has decided on *Ne'er made sic anither.*

No. 160.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

4th December, 1792.

THE foregoing* I submit, my dear Sir, to your better judgment. Acquit them, or condemn them as seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

No. 161.

iggest useful hints, that escape men of much iperior parts and endowments in other things.

If you meet with my dear and much valued C. reet him, in my name, with the compliments of he season. Yours, &c.

No. 162.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, January 20th 1793.

YOU make me happy, my dear Sir, and ousands will be happy to see the charming songs u have sent me. Many merry returns of the son to you, and may you long continue, among e sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight em and to honour yourself.

The four last songs with which you favoured e, viz. *Auld Rob Morris, Duncan Gray, Galla ater*, and *Cauld Kail*, are admirable. Duncan indeed a lad of grace, and his humour will en- ar him to every body.

The distracted lover in *Auld Rob*, and the happy pherdess in *Galla Water*, exhibit an excellent ntrast; they speak from genuine feeling, and werfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in w, was limited; but I now resolve to include ry Scotch air and song worth singing, leaving ne behind but mere gleanings, to which the blishers of *omnegatherum* are welcome. I

would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke engravings; the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr. Beattie's promise of an essay upon the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events, or by the charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than any body, for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me, and we had several long conversations about it when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind, will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c. of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary; they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board, and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, ren-

ders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing, or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend Mr. Clarke, to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on any thing of the kind. But for this last class of airs I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties about writing for the airs I sent to him, because of the peculiarity of their measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air 'Lord Gregory.' The Scots verses printed with that air, are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called *The Loss of Lochroyan*, which I do not admire. I have set down the air therefore as a creditor of yours. Many of the Jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour, might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs.

.....

POSTSCRIPT,

FROM THE HON. A. ERSKINE.

MR. THOMSON has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. Highland Mary is most enchantingly pathetic, and Duncan

Gray possesses native genuine humour; 'spak o' lowpin o'er a linn,' is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend C. who is a most excellent fellow, and possesses, above all men I know, the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, religious and amorous; I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever money he asks for his trouble, and I certainly shall not betray your confidence.—I am your hearty admirer,

ANDREW ERSKINE.

ot from which every song took its rise; *Locha-*
r, and the *Braes of Ballenden*, excepted. So
r as the locality, either from the title of the air,
: the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I
ve paid my devotions at the particular shrine of
ery Scots muse.

I do not doubt but you might make a very
luable collection of Jacobite songs; but would
give no offence? In the mean time, do not
u think that some of them, particularly *The*
w's tail to Geordie, as an air, with other words,
ight be well worth a place in your collection of
ely songs?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it
ould be proper to have one set of Scots words to
ery air, and that the set of words to which the
tes ought to be set. There is a *naïveté*, a pas-
al simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots
rds and phraseology, which is more in unison
t least to my taste, and I will add to every
nuine Caledonian taste) with the simple pathos,
rustic sprightliness of our native music, than
y English verses whatever.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition
your work. His *Gregory* is beautiful. I have
ed to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the
ne subject, which are at your service. Not that
ntend to enter the lists with Peter: that would
presumption indeed. My song, though much
erior in poetic merit, has I think more of the
lad simplicity in it.

) mirk, mirk is this midnight hour.'—*See Poems, p.* 397.

My most respectful compliments to the hono able gentleman who favoured me with a postsc in your last. He shall hear from me and rece his MSS. soon.

No. 164.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

20th March, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE song prefixed* is one of my juven works. I leave it in your hands. I do not thi it very remarkable, either for its merits or merits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in t

No. 165.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 2d April, 1793.

I WILL not recognize the title you give yourself, 'the prince of *indolent* correspondents;' but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would then fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of the songs: these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of the songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs which I propose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favour me with your strictures upon every thing else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here, that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verses, by way of desert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies, and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments: they are indeed beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your Lord Gregory, in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter's,

beautiful as his is! Your *Here awa Willi* undergo some alterations to suit the air. Erskine and I have been conning it over; I suggest what is necessary to make them match.

The gentleman I have mentioned, who taste you are no stranger to, is so well p both with the musical and poetical part work, that he has volunteered his assistanc has already written four songs for it, whi his own desire, I send for your perusal.

No. 166.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON

ace, the last words of the voice of *Coilia** shall e, 'Good night and joy be wi' you a'!' So much or my last words: now for a few present remarks, s they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first lines of *The last time I came o'er the moor*, and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay! the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to *make* or *mend*. *For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove*, is a charming song! but *Logan burn and Logan braes*, are sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember the two last lines of a verse, in some of the old songs of *Logan Water* (for I know a good many different ones) which I think pretty:

'Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.'

My Patie is a lover gay, is unequal. 'His mind is never muddy,' is a muddy expression indeed,

'Then I'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cokernony.'—

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your book. My song, *Rigs of Barley*, to the same tune, does not altogether please me; but if I can mend it, and thresh a few loose sentiments out of

* Burns here calls himself the *Voice of Coila*, in imitation of Ossian, who denominates himself the *Voice of Cona*. *Sae merry as we a' hae been*: and *Good night and joy be wi' you a'*, are the names of two Scottish tunes.

it, I will submit it to your consideration. *The Lass o' Patie's Mill* is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it, which my much-valued friend Mr. Erskine will take into his critical consideration—In Sir J. Sinclair's Statistical volumes, are two claims, one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honour of this song. The following anecdote, which I had from the present Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudon, I can, on such authorities believe.

Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudon-castle with the then earl, father to earl John; and one forenoon, riding or walking out together, his lordship and Allan passed a sweet romantic spot on Irvine water, still called 'Patie's Mill,' where a bonnie lass was 'tedding hay, bareheaded on the green.' My lord observed to Allan, that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint, and lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

One day I heard Mary say, is a fine song; but for consistency's sake alter the name 'Adonis.' Were there ever such banns published, as a purpose of marriage between *Adonis* and *Mary?* I agree with you that my song, *There's nought but care on every hand*, is much superior to *Poortith cauld.* The original song, *The Mill mill O*, though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible; still I like the title, and think a Scottish song would suit the notes best; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow, as an English set. *The Banks of the Dee*, is you know.

literally *Langolee*, to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it: for instance,

'And sweetly the nightingale sung from the *tree*.'

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen, or heard, on the banks of the Dee, or on the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza, equal to *The small birds rejoice, &c.* I do myself honestly avow, that I think it a superior song. *John Anderson my jo*—the song to this tune in Johnson's Museum, is my composition, and I think it not my worst: if it suit you, take it, and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs, is, in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are *Tullochgorum, Lumps o' puddin, Tibbie Fowler*, and several others, which, in my humble judgment, are well worthy of preservation? There is also one sentimental song of mine in the Museum, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called *Craigie burn Wood;* and, in the opinion of Mr. Clarke, is one of the sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it: and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. *Shep-*

herds, I have lost my love! is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scottish verses to it? I have made one to it a good while ago, which I think * * * * * * * * * * * * but in its original state is not quite a lady's song. I enclose an altered, not amended copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow.

Mr. Erskine's songs are all pretty, but his *Lone Vale* is divine.

Yours, &c.

Let me know just how you like these random hints.

No. 167.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, April, 1793.

I REJOICE to find, my dear Sir, that ballad making continues to be your hobby-horse. Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise. I hope you will amble it away for many a year, and 'witch the world with your horsemanship.'

I know there are a good many *lively* songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. *My Patie is a lover gay*, though a little unequal, is a natural and very pleasing song, and I humbly think we

ought not to displace, or alter it, except the last stanza.*

No. 168.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

I HAVE yours, my dear Sir, this moment. I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost.

The business of many of our tunes wanting, at the beginning, what fiddlers call a starting-note, is often a rub to us poor rhymers.

'There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro' the blooming heather.'

you may alter to

'Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
Ye wander, &c.

My song, *Here awa, there awa*, as amended by Mr. Erskine, I entirely approve of, and return you.†

* The original letter from Mr. Thomson contains many observations on the Scottish songs, and on the manner of adapting the words to the music, which, at his desire, are suppressed. The subsequent letter of Mr. Burns refers to several of these observations.

† The reader has already seen that Burns did not finally adopt all of Mr. Erskine's alterations.

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is in my opinion reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point, you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either, in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity: now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, as every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. W. proposes doing with *The last time I came o'er the moor*. Let a poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever, in the dark and narrow house; by heaven 'twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. W.'s version is an improvement; but I know Mr. W. well, and esteem him much; let him mend the song, as a Highlander mended his gun:—he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in *The Lass o' Patie's Mill* must be left out: the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with *Corn rigs are bonnie*. Perhaps it might want the last stanza, and be the better for it. *Cauld kail in Aberdeen* you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air, on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, *Poortith cauld and rest-*

less love. At any rate my other song, *Green grow the rashes,* will never suit. That song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name, which of course would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. Your book will be the standard of Scots songs for the future: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send a song, on a celebrated toast in this country, to suit *Bonnie Dundee.* I send you also a ballad to the *Mill mill O.*

The last time I came o'er the moor, I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MSS Scots airs by me which I have pickt up, mostly from the singing of country lasses. They please me vastly; but your learned *lugs* would perhaps be displeased with the very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air called *Jackie Hume's Lament?* I have a song of considerable merit to that air. I'll enclose you both the song and tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's Museum.* I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce.*†

Adieu!

* The song here mentioned, is 'O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten.'—*See Poems, p.* 395.

† The air here mentioned is that for which he wrote the ballad of 'Bonnie Jean.'—*See Poems, p.* 402.

No. 169.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAD scarcely put my last letter into the post office, when I took up the subject of *The last time I came o'er the moor*, and, ere I slept drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb work; but to be of service to the work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert any thing of mine. One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one *iota* of the original Scottish airs: I mean in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.

No. 170.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 26th April, 1793.

I HEARTILY thank you, my dear Sir, for your last two letters, and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak out your mind, is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but at present suffice it to say, that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the ground-work of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your most interesting new ballad *When wild war's deadly blast, &c.* to the *Mill, mill O,* as well as the two other songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth lines of the first verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music. Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would

be absurd indeed! With the airs which he introduces into the sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases; but that has nothing to do with the songs.

.....

P. S. I wish you would do as you proposed with your *Rigs of Barley*. If the loose sentiments are *threshed* out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

No. 171.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

June, 1793.

tive beauty; so you see how doctors differ. I
l now with as much alacrity as I can muster,
n with your commands.
ou know Frazer, the hautboy-player in Edin-
h—he is here, instructing a band of music
a fencible corps quartered in this country.
ng many of his airs that please me, there is
well known as a reel, by the name of *The*
ker's Wife; and which I remember a grand
: of mine used to sing by the name of *Lig-*
m Cosh, my bonnie wee lass. Mr. Frazer
s it slow, and with an expression that quite
ms me. I became such an enthusiast about
hat I made a song for it, which I here sub-
; and inclose Frazer's set of the tune. If they
your fancy, they are at your service; if not,
m me the tune, and I will put it in Johnson's
eum. I think the song is not in my worst
ner.

'Blythe hae I been on yon hill.'—*See Poems, p.* 400.

should wish to hear how this pleases you.

n ventured, by Mr. Erskine's advice, to substitute for
in that publication,

'And eyes again with pleasure beam'd
That had been blear'd with mourning.'

gh better suited to the music, these lines are inferior to
riginal. This is the only alteration adopted by Mr. Thom-
which Burns did not approve, or at least assent to.

No. 172.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

25th June, 1793.

HAVE you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day, I recollected the air of *Logan Water*; and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some public destroyer; and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done any thing at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour's meditation in my elbow-chair, ought to have some merit.

'O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide.'—*See Poems, p.* 599.

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment in Witherspoon's Collection of Scots Songs?

Air.—'HUGHIE GRAHAM.'

'O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa';
And I mysel a drap o' dew,
Into her bonnie breast to fa'!

Oh, there beyond expression blest,
I'd feast on beauty a' the night;
Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
Till fley'd awa by Phœbus' light.'

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain. After balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following.

The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place; as every poet, who knows any thing of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

O, were my love yon lilach fair,
Wi' purple blossoms to the spring;
And I, a bird to shelter there,
When wearied on my little wing.

How I wad mourn, when it was torn
By autumn wild, and winter rude!
But I wad sing on wanton wing,
When youthfu' May its bloom renew'd.

No. 173.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Monday, 1st July, 1793.

I AM extremely sorry, my good Sir, that any thing should happen to unhinge you.

The times are terribly out of tune; and when harmony will be restored, Heaven knows.

The first book of songs, just published, will be dispatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the *Quaker's Wife;* it is quite enchanting. Pray will you return the list of songs with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included. The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it as soon as it is properly known. And were the sale even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour, by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I

Wednesday, Morning.

I thank you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song to *Logan Water;* Thomson's truly elegant one will follow, for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen is admirable; but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

No. 174.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

July 2d, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just finished the following ballad, and, as I do think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns' *wood-note wild,* is very fond of it, and has given it a celebrity, by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return it. The song you may keep, as I remember it.

'There was a lass and she was fair.'—*See Poems, p.* 402.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out.

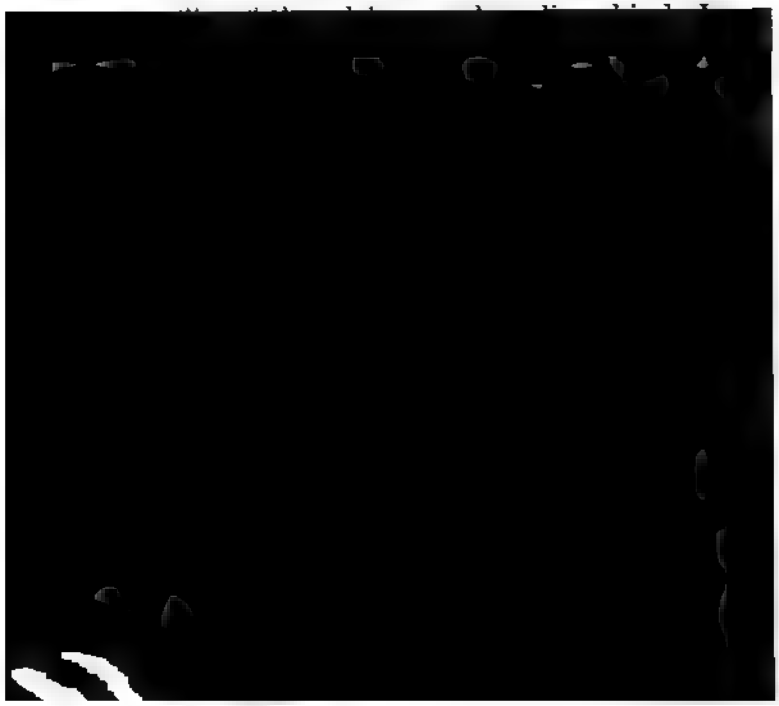
The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M. daugh ter to Mr. M. of D. one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she hold in life, but in the dress and character of a cottage

No. 175.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I ASSURE you, my dear Sir, that yo truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It de grades me in my own eyes. However, to retur it would savour of affectation; but as to any mor



will now be tried for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the SONS and DAUGHTERS of TASTE —all whom poesy can please, or music charm.

Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretel and affirm, that your great-grand-child will hold up your volumes, and say, with honest pride, 'This so much admired selection was the work of my ancestor.'

No. 176.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1st August, 1793.

DEAR SIR,

I HAD the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

The bonnie bruckct Lassie, certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen—Let me in this ae night,* and several of the livelier airs, wait the muse's leisure: these are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts: besides, you'll notice, that in airs of this sort, the singer can always do greater justice to the poet, than in the slower airs of *The Bush aboon Traquair, Lord Gregory,* and the like: for in the manner the latter are frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound, without

the sense. Indeed both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed, they lose animation and expression altogether; and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a yawning!

Your ballad, *There was a lass and she was fair*, is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

No. 177.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

I HOLD the pen for our friend Clarke, who at present is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The *Georgium Sidus* he thinks is rather out of tune; so until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the Rondeau subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them.

.....

Confound your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

No. 178.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

YOUR objection, my dear Sir, to the passages in my song of *Logan Water*, is right in one instance, but it is difficult to mend it: if I can, I will. The other passage you object to, does not appear in the same light to me.

I have tried my hand on *Robin Adair*, and you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a cursed, cramp, out-of-the-way measure, that I despair of doing any thing better to it.

'While larks with little wing.'—*See Poems, p. 404.*

No. 179.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

August, 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,

I CONSIDER it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St. Stephen for the tunes: tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my staircase, conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d' esprit*, which I perused more than once, without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics: though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one, you were just drowning care together; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy!

I shall be glad to see you give *Robin Adair* a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out-of-the-way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with. I wish you would invoke the muse for a single elegant stanza to be substituted for the concluding objectionable verses of *Down the Burn Davie*, so

that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your *John Anderson my Jo*, which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs; you will be quite charmed with it I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson, in great good humour, is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles, and looks at her with such glee, as to shew that he *fully* recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were *first acquent*. The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.

No. 180.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT crinkum-crankum tune, *Robin Adair*, has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear Sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend C.'s story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows:

'Had I a cave on some wild distant shore.'

See Poems, p. 405.

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother's singing Gaelic songs to both *Robin Adair* and *Gramachree*. They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness: so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them:—except, what I shrewdly suspect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, harpers, and pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favourite airs might be common to both. A case in point—They have lately in Ireland, published an Irish air, as they say, called *Coun du delish*. The fact is, in a publication of Corri's, a great while ago, you will find the same air, called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song *set* to it. Its name there, I think, is *Oran Gaoil*, and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. Gaelic Parson, about these matters.

No. 181.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

LET me in this ae night, I will reconder. I am glad that you are pleased with my ng, *Had I a cave*, &c. as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening with a volume of the Museum in my hand; when, turning up *Allan Water*, 'What numbers shall the muse repeat,' &c. as the words appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air, and recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shade of an old thorn, till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong; but I think it not in my worst style. You must know, that in Ramsay's Tea-table, where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is *Allan Water*, or *My love Annie's very bonnie*. This last has certainly been a line of the original song; so I took up the idea, and as you will see, have introduced the line in its place, which I presume it formerly occupied; though I likewise give you a *chusing line*, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy.

'By Allan-stream I chanc'd to rove.'—*See Poems, p.* 406.

Bravo! say I: it is a good song. Should you think so too (not else), you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it than all the year else.

God bless you!

No. 182.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

IS *Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad,* e of your airs? I admire it much; and yester- y I set the following verses to it. Urbani, om I have met with here, begged them of me, he admires the air much; but as I understand t he looks with rather an evil eye on your rk, I did not choose to comply. However, if song does not suit your taste, I may possibly d it him. The set of the air which I had in eye is in Johnson's Museum.

O whistle, and I'll come to you my lad.'—*See Poems, p.* 408.

Another favourite air of mine is, *The muckin o' ordie's Byre*; when sung slow with expression, ave wished that it had had better poetry; that ave endeavoured to supply as follows:

down winding Nith I did wander.'—*See Poems, p.* 407.

Ir. Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a cor- in your book, as she is a particular flame of She is a Miss P. M. sister to *Bonnie Jean.* ey are both pupils of his. You shall hear from the very first grist I get from my rhyming- l.

No. 183.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1795.

THAT tune, *Cauld Kail*, is such a favourite of yours, that I once more roved out yesterday for a gloamin-shot at the muses;* when the muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring, dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet, simple inspirer that was by my elbow, 'smooth gliding without step,' and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's

have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of chorusses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

No. 184.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

DAINTY DAVIE.

'Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers.'—*See Poems, p.* 410.

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the Museum.

N. B. In the Museum they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is **** nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

No. 185.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1st Sep. 1793.

My dear Sir,

SINCE writing you last, I have received half a dozen songs, with which I am delighted

beyond expression. The humour and fancy of *Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad*, will render it nearly as great a favourite as *Duncan Gray*. *Come, let me take thee to my breast—Adown winding Nith*, and *By Allan stream*, &c. are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended. *Had I a cave on some wild distant shore*, is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, read it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think, can never be broken; these songs of yours will descend with the music to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the muse seems so propitious, I think it right to enclose a list of all the favours I have to ask of her, no fewer than twenty and three! I

rvice. But one thing I must hint to you; the ry name of Peter Pindar is of great service to ur publication, so get a verse from him now and en; though I have no objection, as well as I n, to bear the burden of the business.

You know that my pretensions to musical taste : merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught d untutored by art. For this reason, many ısical compositions, particularly where much of e merit lies in counterpoint, however they may nsport and ravish the ears of you connoisseurs, ect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as lodious din. On the other hand, by way of ends, I am delighted with many little melodies, ich the learned musician despises as silly and ipid. I do not know whether the old air *Hey tie taittie* may rank among this number; but l I know that, with Frazer's hautboy, it has n filled my eyes with tears. There is a tra- on, which I have met with in many places of land, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the e of Bannockburn. This thought, in my ry wanderings, warmed me to a pitch of en- ism on the theme of Liberty and Independ- which I threw into a kind of SCOTTISH ode, to the air, that one might suppose to be the ROYAL SCOT's address to his heroic fol- on that eventful morning.*

noble strain was conceived by our poet during a storm e wilds of Glen-Ken in Galloway. A more finished be found in the Poems, see p. 363.

BRUCE TO HIS TROOPS,

ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF

BANNOCKBURN.

TO ITS AIN TUNE.

SCOTS, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
  Or to victorie.

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
  Chains and slavery!

may God ever defend the cause of Truth Liberty, as He did that day!—Amen.

S. I shewed the air to Urbani, who was y pleased with it, and begged me to make verses for it; but I had no idea of giving my- my trouble on the subject, till the accidental lection of that glorious struggle for freedom, iated with the glowing ideas of some other gles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, d my rhyming mania. Clarke's set of the with his bass, you will find in the Museum; gh I am afraid that the air is not what will le it to a place in your elegant selection.

No. 187.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

I DARE say, my dear Sir, that you begin to think my correspondence is persecu- No matter, I can't help it; a ballad is my y-horse; which though otherwise a simple f harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this ed headstrong property, that when once it airly made off with a hapless wight, it gets amoured with the tinkle-gingle of its own ; that it is sure to run poor pilgarlic, the m-jockey, quite beyond any useful point or in the common race of man.

The following song I have composed for *Oran-gaoil*, the Highland air that you tell me in your last, you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well'—if not, 'tis also well!

'Behold the hour, the boat arrive,' &c.—*See Poems, p. 411.*

No. 188.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 5th Sep. 1793.

I BELIEVE it is generally allowed that

, I say, I never heard any one speak of it as thy of notice.

have been running over the whole hundred , of which I lately sent you the list; and I ık *Lewie Gordon* is most happily adapted to ır ode: at least with a very slight variation of fourth line, which I shall presently submit to ı. There is in *Lewie Gordon* more of the grand n the plaintive, particularly when it is sung h a degree of spirit, which your words would ige the singer to give it. I would have no uple about substituting your ode in the room *Lewie Gordon*, which has neither the interest, grandeur, nor the poetry that characterize ur verses. Now the variation I have to suggest on the last line of each verse, the only line too ort for the air, is as follows:

Verse 1*st*. Or to *glorious* victorie.
2*d*. *Chains*—chains, and slaverie.
3*d*. Let him, *let him* turn and flie.
4*th*. Let him, *bravely* follow me.
5*th*. But *they shall*, they shall be free.
6*th*. Let us, *let us* do, or die!

If you connect each line with its own verse, I not think you will find that either the senti- nt or the expression loses any of its energy. e only line which I dislike in the whole of the g is, 'Welcome to your gory bed.' Would another word be preferable to *welcome*? In ır next I will expect to be informed whether ı agree to what I have proposed. The little rations I submit with the greatest deference. The beauty of the verses you have made for *n-gaoil* will ensure celebrity to the air.

No. 189.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE received your list, my dear Sir, and here go my observations on it.*

Down the burn Davie. I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus:

As down the burn they took their way,
And thro' the flowery dale;
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And love was ay the tale.

With 'Mary, when shall we return,
Sic pleasure to renew?'
Quoth Mary, 'Love, I like the burn,
And ay shall follow you.'†

Thro' the wood laddie—I am decidedly of opinion, that both in this; and *There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame*, the second or high part of the tune being a repetition of the first part an octave higher is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

Cowden-knowes. Remember in your index that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning,

* Mr. Thomson's list of songs for his publication.

† This alteration Mr. Thomson has adopted instead of the last stanza of the original song, which is objectionable in point of delicacy.

'When summer comes the swains on Tweed,"

the production of Crawford. Robert was his ıristian name.

Laddie lie near me, must *lie by me* for some ne. I do not know the air; and until I am mplete master of a tune, in my own singing ıch as it is), I can never compose for it. My ıy is: I consider the poetic sentiment corres-ndent to my idea of the musical expression; en choose my theme; begin one stanza; when ıt is composed, which is generally the most fficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down w and then, look out for objects in nature ound me that are in unison and harmony with e cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my som; humming every now and then the air, th the verses I have framed. When I feel my ıse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary e-side of my study, and there commit my effu-ns to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind gs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth r own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. iously, this, at home, is almost invariably my y.

What cursed egotism;

Gill Morice, I am for leaving out. It is a guy length; the air itself is never sung; and place can well be supplied by one or two songs fine airs that are not in your list. For in-ıce, *Craigie-burn Wood*, and *Roy's Wife*. The ; beside its intrinsic merit, has novelty: and last has high merit, as well as great celebrity. ıve the original words of a song for the sake an he hand writing of the lady who composed it

and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.

Highland-laddie. The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best; and the new, an Italianized one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls the old *Highland-laddie,* which pleases more than either of them. It is sometimes called *Ginglan Johnnie;* it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, *I hae been at Crookieden, &c.* I would advise you in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and in the mean time, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum Est.*

Auld Sir Simon, I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place *The Quaker's Wife.*

Fee him father—I inclose you Frazer's set of this tune when he plays it slow; in fact he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas, in that style, merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Frazer gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which *Patie Allan's mither died, that was about the back o' mid-night;* and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company, except the hautbois and the muse.

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie, Thou hast left me ever,
Thou hast left me ever, Jamie, Thou hast left me ever,
Aften hast thou vow'd that death, Only should us sever,
Now thou'st left thy lass for ay—I maun see thee never, Jamie,
I'll see thee never.

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie, Thou hast me forsaken,
Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie, Thou hast me forsaken.
Thou canst love anither jo, While my heart is breaking:
Soon my weary e'en I'll close—Ne'er mair to waken, Jamie,
Ne'er mair to waken.*

Jockey and Jenny I would discard, and in its place would put *There's nae luck about the house,* which has a very pleasant air, and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scottish, or perhaps in any other language. *When she came ben she bobbet,* as an air, is more beauti-

* This is the whole of the song. The bard never proceeded any farther. *Note by Mr. Thomson.*

ful than either, and in the *andante* way, would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

Saw ye my Father? is one of my greatest favourites. The evening before last, I wandered out, and began a tender song; in what I think is its native style. I must premise, that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings—*Saw* ye my father, &c.

My song is but just begun; and I should like, before I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scottish dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English.

'Where are the joys," &c.—*See Poems, p.* 414.

Todlin hame. Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine; that this air is highly

Hardiknute, *Barbara Allan*, (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared), and besides, do you know that I really have the old tune to which *The Cherry and the Slae* was sung; and which is mentioned as a well known air in Scotland's Complaint, a book published before poor Mary's days. It was then called *The Banks o' Helicon*; an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's history of Scottish music. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

No. 190.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I AM happy, my dear Sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea, "honour's bed," is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so, if you please, we will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows:

'Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled."—*See Poems, p.* 363.

N. B. I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace.

'A false usurper sinks in every foe,
And liberty returns with every blow.'

A couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had enough of my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort!—I suffer so much, just now, in this world, for last night's joviality, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen.

No. 191.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

12th Sept. 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much in unison

are passable. But the sweet song for *Fee him Father*, which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr. James Balfour, the king of good fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with *Fee him Father*, and with *Todlin hame* also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs—Some Bacchanals I would wish to discard. *Fy, let's a' to the Bridal*, for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers; and *Saw ye my Father?* appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. Gory presents a disagreeable image to the mind, and to tell them 'Welcome to your gory bed,' seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shewn the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest,

'Now prepare for honour's bed,
Or for glorious victorie.'

No. 192.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

'WHO shall decide when doctors disagree?' My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it; as I think I have much improved it. Instead of 'soger! hero!' I will have it 'Caledonian! on wi' me!'

I have scrutinized it over and over; and to the world some way or other it shall go as it is. At the same time it will not in the least hurt me,

'Where are the joys I have met in the morning,' &c.
See Poems, p. 414.

Adieu, my dear Sir! The post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

No. 193.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs, for which you have allotted me to find English songs.

For *Muirland Willie*, you have, in Ramsay's Tea-table, an excellent song, beginning, 'Ah! why those tears in Nelly's eyes?' As for *The Collier's Dochter*, take the following old Bacchanal.

'Deluded swain, the pleasure," &c.—*See Poems, p.* 415.

The faulty line in Logan-Water, I mend thus:

'How can your flinty hearts enjoy,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry?'

The song otherwise will pass. As to *M'Gregoira Rua-Ruth*, you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours, in the Museum, vol. ii. p. 181. The song begins,

'Raving winds around her blowing.'

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the *Banks of*

Banna, for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs: I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of *Roy's Wife*, for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. *Deil tak the wars*, is a charming song; so is, *Saw ye my Peggy? There's nae luck about the house*, well deserves a place. I cannot say that, *O'er the hills and far awa*, strikes me as equal to your selection. *This is no my ain house*, is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me your set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of *I hae laid a Herrin in saut?* I like it much.

No. 194.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

October, 1793.

YOUR last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas, poor Erskine!* The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has till now scared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the *Quaker's Wife*; though, by the bye, an old Highland gentleman, and a deep antiquarian, tells me it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of *Leiger m' choss*. The following verses, I hope, will please you, as an English song to the air.

Thine am I, my faithful fair,
  Thine, my lovely Nancy;
Ev'ry pulse along my veins,
  Ev'ry roving fancy.

To thy bosom lay my heart,
  There to throb and languish:
Tho' despair had wrung its core,
  That would heal its anguish.

Take away these rosy lips,
  Rich with balmy treasure:
Turn away thine eyes of love,
  Lest I die with pleasure.

* The honourable A. Erskine, brother to lord Kelly, whose melancholy death Mr. Thomson had communicated in an excellent letter, which he has suppressed.

What is life, when wanting love?
Night without a morning:
Loves the cloudless summer sun,
Nature gay adorning.

Your objection to the English song I proposed for *John Anderson my jo*, is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. The song was never in print, which I think is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit.

SONG,

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

O, condescend, dear charming maid,
My wretched state to view;
A tender swain to love betray'd,
And sad despair, by you.

Let generous pity warm thee,
My wonted peace restore;
And, grateful, I shall bless thee still,
And love thee more and more.

The following address of Turnbull's to the ghtingale, will suit as an English song to the , *There was a lass and she was fair.* By the e, Turnbull has a great many songs in MS. ich I can command, if you like his manner. ssibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may be ejudiced in his favour, but I like some of his ces very much.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

BY G. TURNBULL.

THOU sweetest minstrel of the grove,
That ever tried the plaintive strain,
Awake thy tender tale of love,
And sooth a poor forsaken swain.

For tho' the muses deign to aid,
And teach him smoothly to complain;
Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

All day, with fashions' gaudy sons,
In sport she wanders o'er the plain:
Their tales approves, and still she shuns
The notes of her forsaken swain.

When evening shades obscure the sky,
And bring the solemn hours again,
Begin, sweet bird, thy melody,
And sooth a poor forsaken swain.

shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's. ch would go charmingly to *Lewie Gordon.*

LAURA.

BY G. TURNBULL.

Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood or winding rill;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers;
Where the linnet's early song
Echoes sweet the woods among:
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

If at rosy dawn I chuse,
To indulge the smiling muse;
If I court some cool retreat,
To avoid the noon-tide heat;
If beneath the moon's pale ray,
Thro' unfrequented wilds I stray;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

No. 195.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

7th Nov. 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,

AFTER so long a silence, it gave me eculiar pleasure to recognize your well-known and, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all as not well with you. I am happy to find, owever, that your silence did not proceed from at cause, and that you have got among the balds once more.

I have to thank you for your English song to *ciger m' choss*, which I think extremely good, though the colouring is warm. Your friend Mr. Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable erit; and as you have the command of his anuscripts, I hope you will find out some that ill answer, as English songs, to the airs yet unrovided.

No. 196.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

December, 1793.

TELL me how you like the following nes to the tune of *Jo Janet*.

'Husband, husband, cease your strife.'—*See Poems, p.* 415.

.....

'Wilt thou be my dearie?'—*See Poems, p.* 417.

No. 197.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17th April, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

OWING to the distress of our friend for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity, till lately, of perusing it. How

engrave it. In subjects of the pastoral and humorous kind, he is, perhaps, unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his colouring is *sombre*, otherwise his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the *Sutor's Dochter*, and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume; your verses to it are pretty; but your humorous English song, to suit *Jo Janet*, is inimitable. What think you of the air, *Within a mile of Edinburgh?* It has always struck me as a modern English imitation, but it is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked, that I believe I must include it. The verses are little better than *namby pamby*. Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

No. 198.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

May, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

I RETURN you the plates, with which I am highly pleased; I would humbly propose instead of the younker knitting stockings, to put a stock and horn into his hands. A friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the *Burin*, is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I got him a

peep of the *Gentle Shepherd*; and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Allan's choosing my favourite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, *I shall be quite in song*, as you shall see by-and-by. I got an air, pretty enough, composed by lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, which she calls *The Banks of Cree*. Cree is a beautiful romantic stream; and as her ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it.

'Here is the glen, and here the bower.'—*See Poems*, p. 417

No. 201.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

30th August, 1794.

THE last evening, as I was straying out, and thinking of, *O'er the hills and far away*, I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silk-worm, or brushed to the devil, like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear Sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first: but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

No. 202.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 16th Sept. 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU have anticipated my opinion of *On the seas and far away*; I do not think it one of your very happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all acceptation.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly, 'Bullets, spare my only joy!' Confound the bullets! It might, perhaps, be objected to the third verse, 'At the starless midnight hour,' that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of thought would have better suited the character of a sailor's sweetheart. The tune, it must be remembered, is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the chorusses.

No. 203.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1794.

I SHALL withdraw my, *On the seas and far away,* altogether: it is unequal, and un-

worthy the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son: you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world to try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, *abortions* and all; and, as such, pray look over them. and forgive them, and burn them. I am flattered at your adopting *Ca' the yowes to the knowes*, as it was owing to me that ever it saw the light. About seven years ago I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunie, who sung it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of

[have often regretted the want of decent
s to it. It is too much, at least for my hum-
ustic muse, to expect that every effort of
shall have merit; still I think that it is bet-
o have mediocre verses to a favourite air,
none at all. On this principle I have all
; proceeded in the Scots Musical Museum;
s that publication is at its last volume, I in-
the following song to the air above-mention-
or that work.
it does not suit you as an editor, you may be
ed to have verses to it that you can sing be-
adies.

e flaxen were her ringlets,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 421.

t to compare small things with great, my
in music is like the mighty Frederick of
sia's taste in painting: we are told that he
ently admired what the connoisseurs decried,
always without any hypocrisy confessed his
ration. I am sensible that my taste in music
be inelegant and vulgar, because people of
sputed and cultivated taste can find no merit
y favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply
ed, is that any reason why I should deny
lf that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys,
nt and modern, give me most exquisite en-
ent, where you and other judges would pro-
be shewing disgust. For instance, I am
now making verses for *Rothiemurche's Rant*,
ir which puts me in raptures; and in fact,
s I be pleased with the tune, I never can
e verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my
who is a judge that I will pit against any of

you. *Rothiemurche*, he says, is an air both original and beautiful; and on his recommendation I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth or last part for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.

'Lassie wi' the lint white locks,' &c.—*See Poems, p. 432.*

I have begun anew, *Let me in this ae night.* Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *denouëment* to be successful or otherwise? should she 'let him in,' or not?

'Maxwell, if merit here you crave,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 291.

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle!

No. 205.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

I PERCEIVE the sprightly muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet, whose *wood-notes wild* are becoming as enchanting as ever. *She says she lo'es me best of a'*, is one of the pleasantest table-songs I have seen, and henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs, in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman; without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the *Sow's Tail*, particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordie, as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs. Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your *Ca' the ewes*, is a precious little morceau. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let

me ask you, whether you never seriously turned your thoughts upon dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas: few or none of those which have appeared since the *Duenna*, possess much poetical merit: there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience. They are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs of course would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—Storace for Drury-lane, or Shield for Covent-garden:

No. 206.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 14th Oct. 1794.

THE last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered, till I am half blind, and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added, are enclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are in general elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published by Mr. Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shews clearly that Mr. Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish; and that his classification of the airs according to the æras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, esq. he has no mercy; but consigns him to damnation! He snarls at my publication, on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it; uncandidly and unjustly leaving it to be inferred, that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a-packing to make room for Peter's! Of you he speaks with some respect, but gives you a passing hit or two, for

daring to dress up a little, some old foolish songs for the Museum. His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities: many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognize the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed; and as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so, even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste, and discernment to choose the best they could hear, (which is far

No. 207.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

19th October, 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

BY this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. Clarke goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him and take his opinion in general: you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two; so, please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do, persuade you to adopt my favourite, *Craigie-burn-Wood*, in your selection; it is as great a favourite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made, is one of the finest women in Scotland; and in fact *(entre nous)* is in a manner to me, what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now don't put any of your squinting constructions on this or have any clishmaclaver about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos, equal to the genius of your

book? No! no!—Whenever I want to be more than ordinary *in song*; to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs; do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus; and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to business; if you like my idea of of *When she cam ben she bobbit*, the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly when set to another air, may perhaps do instead of worse stanzas.

'O saw ye my dear, my Phely,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 422.

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. *The Posie*, (in the Museum) is my composition; the air was taken down from Mrs. Burn's voice. It is well known in the West Country, but the old words are trash. By the bye, take a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which *Roslin Castle* is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. *Strathallan's Lament* is mine; the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved Allan Masterton. *Donocht-Head* is not mine; I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the Edinburgh Herald; and came to the editor of that

per with the Newcastle post-mark on it.* *histle o'er the lave o't* is mine: the music said

The reader will be curious to see this poem, so highly ised by Burns. It was written by George Pickering, of wcastle.

Keen blaws the wind o'er Donocht-Head,
The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale;
The Gaber-lunzie tirls my sneck,
And, shivering, tells his waefu' tale:
'Cauld is the night, O let me in,
And dinna let your minstrel fa';
And dinna let his winding sheet
Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

Full ninety winters hae I seen,
And pip'd where gor-cocks whirring flew;
And mony a day I've danc'd, I ween,
To lilts which from my drone I blew.'
My Eppie wak'd, and soon she cry'd,
'Get up guidman, and let him in;
For weel ye ken the winter night
Was short when he began his din.'

My Eppie's voice, O wow it's sweet,
Even tho' she bans and scalds a wee;
But when it's tun'd to sorrow's tale,
O, haith, its doubly dear to me!
Come in, auld carl, I'll steer my fire,
I'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame;
Your bluid is thin, ye've tint the gate,
Ye should nae stray sae far frae hame.

'Nae hame have I,' the minstrel said,
Sad party-strife o'erturned my ha';
And, weeping, at the eve of life,
I wander thro' a wreath o' snaw.'

.....

This affecting poem is apparently incomplete. The author ed not be ashamed to own himself. It is worthy of Burns, of Macneil.

to be by a John Bruce, a celebrated violin-player in Dumfries, about the beginning of this century. This I know, Bruce, who was an honest man, though a red-wud Highlandman, constantly damned it; and by all the old musical people here, is believed to be the author of it.

Andrew and his cutty Gun. The song to which this is set in the Museum is mine, and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called the Flower of Strathmore.

How long and dreary is the night! I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and to please you, and to suit your favourite air, I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page.

have of my native tongue. I have been at *Duncan Gray*, to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance:

'Let not woman e'er complain,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 423.

Since the above, I have been out in the country, taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page in this odds-and-ends of a letter. As usual I got *into song*; and returning home I composed the following:

'Sleep'st thou or wak'st thou, fairest creature,' &c.
See Poems, p. 430.

If you honour my verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood.

I enclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scottish one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman, who brought it over, is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the Musical Museum. Here follow the verses I intend for it.

'But lately seen in gladsome green,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 426.

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs, which you mention in your letter. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please; whether this miserable drawling hotchpotch epistle has not completely tired you of my correspondence?

No. 208.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 27th Oct. 1794.

I AM sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable she whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often enraptured the Scottish bard! that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. *Craigie-burn-Wood* must certainly be adopted into my family since *she* is the object of the song; but in the name of decency I must beg a new chorus-verse from you. *O to be lying beyond thee, dearie,* is perhaps a consummation

charming design from Maggie Lauder. She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P. S. Pray what do your anecdotes say concerning *Maggie Lauder?* was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely *spier for her if you ca'ed at Anstruther town.*

No. 209.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

November, 1794.

MANY thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your present. It is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c. for your work. I intend drawing it up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious, dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c. it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work. In my last, I told you my objections to the song you had selected for *My Lodging is on the cold Ground.* On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration), she suggested

an idea, which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song.

'My Chloris, mark how green the groves.'—*See Poems, p. 431.*

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral? I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of *Ma chere Amie*. I assure you I was never more in earnest in my life, than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last.—Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel, and highly venerate; but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy as that other species of the passion,

'Where Love is Liberty, and Nature law.'

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the

want; and, with a little alteration, so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song, which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany, I have cut down for an English dress to your *Daintie Davie*, as follows:

'It was the charming month of May.'—*See Poems, p.* 428.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it. I have finished my song to *Rothiemurche's Rant*; and you have Clarke to consult as to the set of the air for singing.

'Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 432.

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well: if not, I will insert it in the Museum.

I am out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as, *Deil tak the Wars*, to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of *Saw ye my Father?* by heavens! the odds is gold to brass! Besides, the old song, though now pretty well modernized into the Scottish language, is originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D'Urfey: so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty Eng-

lish song by Sheridan, in the *Duenna*, to this air, which is out of sight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins,

'When sable night each drooping plant restoring.'

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, tenderness, and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune as follows.*

Now for my English song to *Nancy's to the Greenwood, &c.*

'Farewell thou stream that winding flows.'—*See Poems, p. 398.*

There is an air, *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*, to which I wrote a song that you will find in Johnson.

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon; this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights. Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in your good town, a gentleman whom possibly you know, was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr. Clarke partly by way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm; and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is, that, in a few

* See the song in its first and best dress, *Poems*, p. 430. Our bard remarks upon it, 'I could easily throw this into an English mould; but, to my taste, in the simple and the tender of the pastoral song, a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect.'

THE BANKS O'DOON.

Of thee I need by Bonnie Doon.

Engraved by Mackenzie & Dent, London.

days, Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr. Clarke with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know, has the same story of the *Black Keys*; but this account which I have just given you, Mr. Clarke informed me of, several years ago. Now to shew you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that this was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a Countess informed me, that the first person who introduced the air into this country, was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult then to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I, myself, have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting *Craigie-burn-Wood*; and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact the chorus was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air. If I can catch myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment, I shall write a new *Craigie-burn-Wood* altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request; 'tis dunning your generosity; but in a moment, when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this: but an ungracious request is doubly so by a

tedious apology. To make you some amends, as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humour, I know not when to give over.

No. 210.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

MY GOOD SIR,

15th November, 1794.

SINCE receiving your last, I have had another interview with Mr. Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the *Caledonian Hunt* is more Bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited for a man's voice, and the second part in many instances cannot be sung, at concert pitch, but by a female voice. A song thus performed makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you would think of it in some of

those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent me is admirable, and will be an universal favourite.

Your verses for *Rothiemurche* are so sweetly pastoral, and your serenade to Chloris, for *Deil tak the Wars*, so passionately tender, that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for *My lodging is on the cold ground*, is likewise a diamond of the first water; I am quite dazzled and delighted by it. Some of your Chlorises I suppose have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour; else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks.

Farewell thou stream that winding flows, I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after *Nancy:* at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for *Dainty Davie* will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes! I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies. and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

No. 211.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

19th November, 1794.

YOU see, my dear Sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the *tedium* of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is

taken vulgarity for simplicity: whereas, simplicity is as much *eloignee* from vulgarity, on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit on the other.

I agree with you as to the air, *Craigie-burn-Wood*, that a chorus would in some degree spoil the effect; and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not however a case in point with *Rothiemurche*; there, as in *Roy's Wife of Aldivaloch*, a chorus goes, to my taste, well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with *Roy's Wife*, as well as *Rothiemurche*. In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humour the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting note, in both tunes, has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of.

Try, { O Roy's Wife of Aldivaloch.
O lassie wi' the lint-white locks.

and

Compare with, { *Roy's* Wife of Aldivaloch.
Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas in the first insipid method, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong, I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti*.

The Caledonian Hunt is so charming that it would make any subject in a song go down; but

pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scottish Bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, *Todlin Hame*, is, for wit and humour, an unparalleled composition; and *Andrew and his cutty Gun*, is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heart-ache. Apropos to Bacchanalian songs in Scottish; I composed one yesterday, for an air I like much—*Lumps o' Pudding*.

'Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,' &c.
See Poems, p. 426.

If you do not relish this air, I will send it to Johnson.

.....

mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have, at last, gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts; the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the smaller end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone; and lastly, an oaten reed exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd-boy have, when the corn-stems are green and full-grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventiges on the upper side, and one back-ventige, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly; for we can make little of it. If Mr. Allan chooses I will send him a sight of mine; as I look on myself to be a kind of brother-brush with him. 'Pride in Poets is nae sin;' and I will say it, that I look on Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world.

No. 212.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

28th November, 1794.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear Sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you never entered into my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have all along condescended

ngs are unknown: it is provoking to every ad-
irer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your
autiful ballad, *The Soldier's Return*, to be en-
aved for one of my frontispieces. The most in-
resting point of time appears to me, when she
st recognizes her ain dear Willy, 'She gaz'd,
e redden'd like a rose.' The three lines imme-
ately following are no doubt more impressive
the reader's feelings; but were the painter to
on these, then you'll observe the animation
d anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he
uld only represent her fainting in the soldier's
ms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg
ur opinion.

Allan desires me to thank your for your accurate
scription of the stock and horn, and for the very
tifying compliment you pay him in considering
worthy of standing in a niche by the side of
ns in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen
rude instrument you describe, so does not
t you to send it; but wishes to know whether
believe it to have ever been generally used as
sical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and
, and in what part of the country chiefly.
bt much if it was capable of any thing but
g and roaring. A friend of mine says he
bers to have heard one in his younger days,
of wood instead of your bone, and that the
was abominable.

ot, I beseech you, return any books.

No. 213.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

December, 1794.

IT is, I assure you, the pride of my heart, to do any thing to forward, or add to the value of your book; and as I agree with you that the Jacobite song in the Museum, to *There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame*, would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:

'Now in her green mantle blythe nature arrays,' &c.

See Poems, p. 434.

No. 214.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

January, 1795.

I FEAR for my songs; however a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. For these three thousand years, we poetic folks, have been describing the spring, for instance; and as the spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c. of these said rhyming folks.

A great critic, Aikin, on songs, says, that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject and consequently is no song; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts, inverted into rhyme.

'Is there, for honest poverty,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 433.

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*; for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for *Craigie-burn-Wood*?

'Sweet fa's the eve on Craigie-burn,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 437.

Farewell! God bless you.

No. 215.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 30th Jan. 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

I THANK you heartily for *Nannie's awa*, as well as for *Craigie-burn*, which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts, in the same style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has again and again excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la bagatelle* song, *For a' that*, shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

No. 216.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

February, 1795.

HERE is another trial at your favourite air.

'O Lassie, art thou sleeping yet,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 441.

.....

'O tell na me o' wind and rain,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 442.

I do not know whether it will do.

No. 217.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

Ecclefechan, 7th Feb. 1795.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

YOU cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as Supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late), I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked, little village. I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress; I have tried to 'gae back the gait I cam again,' but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing catgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them; like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed), I, of two evils have chosen the least, and am, very drunk, at your service?*

I wrote to you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time then to tell you all I wanted to say; and heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

* The bard must have been tipsy indeed, to abuse sweet Ecclefechan at this rate.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it, *We'll gang nae mair to yon town*? I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye to whom I would consecrate it.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

No. 218.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

25th February, 1795.

I HAVE to thank you, my dear Sir, for

No. 219.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

'O stay, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay,' &c.
See Poems, p. 435.

LET me know, your very first leisure, how you like this song.

'Can I cease to care,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 436.

How do you like the foregoing? The Irish air, *Humours of Glen*, is a great favourite of mine; and as, except the silly stuff in the *Poor Soldier*, there are not any decent verses for it, I have written for it as follows:

'Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,' &c.
See Poems, p. 440.

.....

'Twas na her bonnie blue e'e was my ruin,' &c.
See Poems, p. 411.

Let me hear from you.

No. 220.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

YOU must not think, my good Sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my

gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of the Cotter's Saturday Night is, in my opinion one of the happiest productions of Allan's pencil I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz. This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs. Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic *Address to the Wood-lark*, your elegant *Panegyric on Caledonia*, and your affecting verses on *Chloris's illness*. Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song to 'Laddie, lie near me,' though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

ticism don't cure me. If you can in a post or
administer a little of the intoxicating portion
your applause, it will raise your humble ser-
nt's frenzy to any height you want. I am at
is moment 'holding high converse' with the
lues, and have not a word to throw away on
ch a prosaic dog as you are.

No. 222.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

TEN thousand thanks for your elegant
esent: though I am ashamed of the value of it,
ing bestowed on a man who has not by any
eans merited such an instance of kindness. I
ve shewn it to two or three judges of the first
ilities here, and they all agree with me in class-
g it as a first-rate production. My phiz is *sae*
speckle, that the very joiner's apprentice whom
r. Burns employed to break up the parcel (I
s out of town that day), knew it at once.—My
st grateful compliments to Allan, who has
noured my rustic muse so much with his mas-
ly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the
le one who is making the felonious attempt on
cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of an
deedie, d—n'd, wee, rumble-gairie, urchin of
ne, whom, from that propensity to witty wick-
ess, and manfu' mischief, which even at twa

days auld, I foresaw would form the striking features of his disposition, I named Willie Nicol, after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless.

Give the enclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Cunningham, and tell him that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of me, in a manner introduced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, Colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

No. 223.

esteem and respect you for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you would not make a fool of me again, by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetizing. Long may it last! Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of *William and Margaret*, and is to give it to me, to be enrolled among the elect.

No. 224.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

IN *Whistle, and I'll come to ye my lad*, the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes what I think is an improvement:

O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
Tho' father, and mother, and a' should gae mad,
Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair dame at whose shrine I, the Priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus; a dame, whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the loves have armed with lightning, a Fair One, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment: and dispute her commands if you dare!

'I see a form, I see a face,' &c.—*See Poems, p. 445.*

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The enclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

I enclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song, *O bonnie was yon rosy brier*. I do not know whether I am right; but that song pleases me, and as it is extremely probable that Clarke's newly roused celestial spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of indolence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish verses, to the air of *I wish my love was in a mire*; and poor Erskine's English lines may follow.

I enclose you, a *For a' that and a' that*, which

'Tis Friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,' &c.
See Poems, p. 506.

No. 225.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 3d Aug. 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

THIS will be delivered to you by a Dr. Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman, but his friend, who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptation.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! It is superfluous to tell you that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter *O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad,* to the prosaic line, *Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad.* I must be permitted to say, that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeany, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.

I should be happy to see Mr. Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Every body

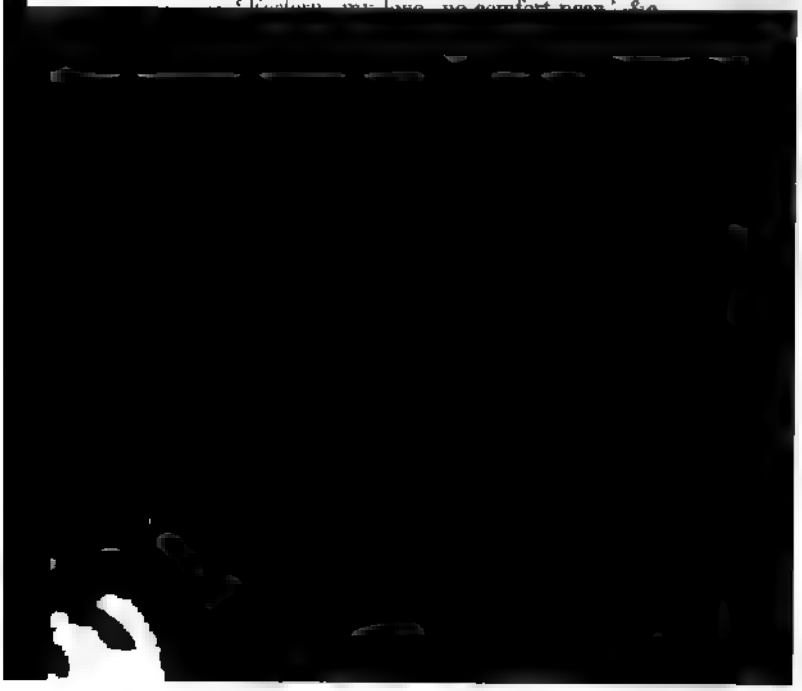
regrets his writing so very little, as every body acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray was the resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow, made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr. Cunningham what you have sent him.

P. S. The lady's *For a' that and a' that*, is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours than I to Hercules.

No. 226.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.



'Why, why tell thy lover,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 405.

SUCH is the peculiarity of the rhythm f this air, that I find it impossible to make ano-ıer stanza to suit it.

I am at present quite occupied with the charm-ıg sensations of the tooth-ache, so have not a ·ord to spare.

No. 228.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

3d June, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR English verses to *Let me in this* e *night,* are tender and beautiful; and your bal-ıd to the 'Lothian Lassie,' is a master-piece for s humour and naïveté. The fragment for the *aledonian Hunt* is quite suited to the original easure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the agment must content it. I would rather, as I id before, have had Bacchanalian words, had it › pleased the poet; but, nevertheless, for what 'e have received, Lord make us thankful!

No. 229.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

5th February, 1796.

O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet?
Or are ye wauking, I would wit?

THE pause you have made, my dear Sir, is awful! Am I never to hear from you again? I know and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late, but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs

No. 230.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

February, 1796.

MANY thanks, my dear Sir, for your handsome, elegant present, to Mrs. B——, and for my remaining vol. of P. Pindar.—Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favourite of mine. I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo, with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipt three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which I admire much.

'Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,' &c.
See Poems, p. 448.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement. In my by-past songs I dislike one thing; the name of Chloris—I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady: but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad.—Of this, and some things else, in my next: I have more amendments to propose.—What you once mentioned of 'flaxen locks' is just; they cannot enter into an *elegant* description of beauty. Of this also again—God bless you!

No. 281.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

YOUR *Hey for a lass wi' a tocher,* is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire, into an amateur of acres and guineas.—

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In

No. 232.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1796.

ALAS, my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! 'By Babel streams I have sat and wept,' almost ever since I wrote you last: I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever, have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope, I look on the vernal day, and say, with poor Fergusson—

> 'Say wherefore has an all indulgent heaven
> Light to the comfortless and wretched given?'

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years has been my *howff*, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I am highly delighted with Mr. Allan's etchings. *Woo'd and married an' a'*, is admirable. The *grouping* is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire, *Turnim-spike*. What I like least is, *Jenny said to Jockey*. Besides the female being in her appearance * * * * * if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches

taller than her lover. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathize with him! Happy I am to think that he has yet a well grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but that is a * * * * * subject!

No. 233.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

4th May, 1796.

I NEED not tell you, my good Sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to

No. 234.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

I ONCE mentioned to you an air which I have long admired—*Here's a health to them that's awa, hiney*, but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

'Although thou maun never be mine,' &c.

See Poems, p. 449.

No. 235.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

THIS will be delivered by a Mr. Lewars, a young fellow of uncommon merit. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you choose, to write me by him; and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account. I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so, when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the

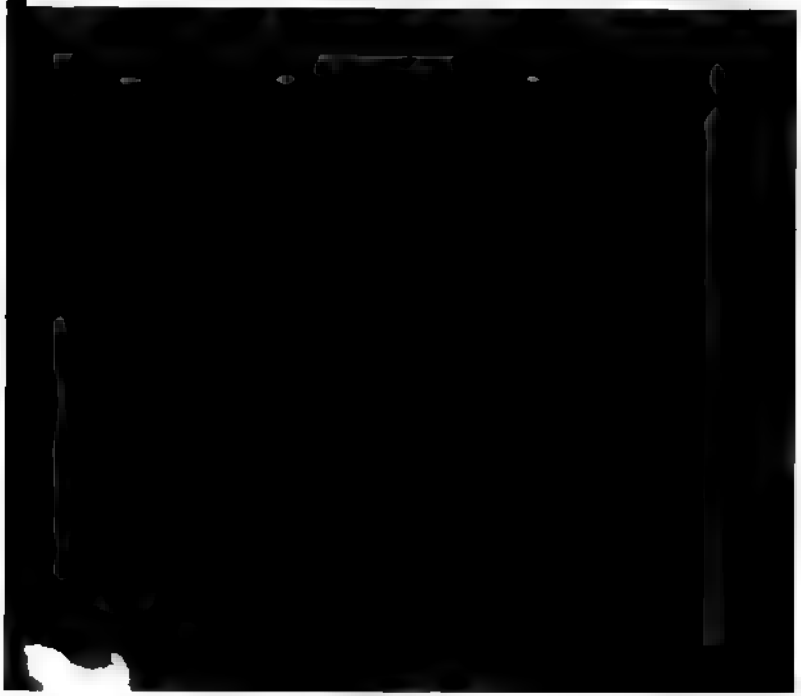
originals or copies.* I had rather be the author of five well-written songs, than of ten, otherwise. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout—a sad business.

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

No. 236.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.



you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song genius you have seen. I tried my hand on *Rothiemurche* this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

'Full well thou know'st I love thee dear,' &c.*

See Poems, p. 443.

No. 237.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

14th July, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,

EVER since I received your melancholy letter, by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily therefore for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and with great pleasure

* These verses and the letter enclosing them, are written in a character that marks the feeble state of Burns's bodily strength. Mr. Syme is of opinion that he could not have been in any danger of a jail at Dumfries, where certainly he had many firm friends, nor under any such necessity of imploring aid from Edinburgh. But about this time his reason began to be at times unsettled, and the horrors of a jail perpetually haunted his imagination. He died on the 21st of this month.

enclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake!

Pray, my good Sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of Editor. In the mean time it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour: remember Pope published the Iliad by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute any thing I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully.

I saw you, and have composed, among several others, *The Ordination*, a poem, on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; *Scotch Drink*, a poem; *The Cotter's Saturday Night; An Address to the Devil*, &c. I have likewise completed my poem on the *Dogs*, but have not shewn it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr. Aikin in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Ferguson, by Connel,* and I will remit you the money. I have no news to acquaint you with about Mauchline, they are just going on in the old way. I have some very important news with respect to myself, not the most agreeable, news that I am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith;† he is the only friend I have *now* in Mauchline. I can scarcely forgive your long neglect of me, and I beg you will let me hear from you regularly by Connel. If you would act your part as a FRIEND, I am sure neither *good* nor *bad* fortune should strange or alter me. Excuse haste, as I got yours but yesterday.—I am,

My dear Sir, Yours,
ROBERT BURNESS.‡

* *Connel*, the Mauchline carrier.

† Mr. *James Smith*, then a shop-keeper in Mauchline. It was to this young man that Burns addressed one of his finest performances—'To J. S——' beginning

'*Dear S——, the sleest, paukie, thief.*'

He died in the West Indies.

‡ This is the only letter the Editor has met with in which the Poet adds the termination *css* to his name, as his Father and family had spelled it.

No. 239.

TO MR. M'W——IE, WRITER, AYR.

Mossgiel, 17th April, 1786.

IT is injuring *some* hearts, those hearts that *elegantly* bear the impression of the good Creator, to say to them you give them the trouble of obliging a friend; for this reason, I only tell you that I gratify my *own* feeling in requesting your friendly offices with respect to the inclosed, because I know it will gratify *yours* to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

I have sent you four copies, as I have no less than eight dozen, which is a great deal more than I shall ever need

No. 240.

TO MONS. JAMES SMITH, MAUCHLINE.

Monday Morning, Mossgiel, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WENT to Dr. Douglas yesterday, ly resolved to take the opportunity of Captain ıith; but I found the Doctor with a Mr. and s. White, both Jamaicans, and they have de-ıged my plans altogether. They assure him, ıt to send me from Savannah la Mar to Port ıtonio will cost my master, Charles Douglas, wards of fifty pounds; besides running the risk throwing myself into a pleuritic fever, in con-quence of hard travelling in the sun. On these ounts, he refuses sending me with Smith, but essel sails from Greenock the first of September ht for the place of my destination. The Cap-n of her is an intimate of Mr. Gavin Hamilton's, d as good a fellow as heart could wish: with n I am destined to go. Where I shall shelter, know not, but I hope to weather the storm. rish the drop of blood of mine that fears them! know their worst, and am prepared to meet it.—

I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow.

On Thursday morning, if you can muster as ıch self-denial as to be out of bed about seven

o'clock, I shall see you as I ride through to Cumnock. After all, Heaven bless the sex! I feel there is still happiness for me among them.—

O woman, lovely woman! Heaven designed you
To temper man! we had been brutes without you!

No. 241.

TO MR. DAVID BRICE.

Mossgiel, June 12th, 1786.

DEAR BRICE,

I RECEIVED your message by G. Paterson, and as I am not very throng at present, I just write to let you know that there is such a

h action I intend to do; and then turn a wise ıan as *fast as possible.*

Believe me to be,
Dear BRICE,
Your friend and well-wisher.

No. 242.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ. MAUCHLINE.

Edinburgh, 7th Dec. 1786.

HONOURED SIR,

I HAVE paid every attention to your ommands, but can only say, what perhaps you ill have heard before this reach you, that Muir-irklands were bought by a John Gordon, W. S. ut for whom I know not; Mauchlands, Haugh liln, &c. by a Frederick Fotheringham, sup-osed to be for Ballochmyle Laird, and Adam-ill and Shawood were brought for Oswald's folks. -This is so imperfect an account, and will be so ıte ere it reach you, that were it not to discharge ıy conscience I would not trouble you with it; ut after all my diligence I could make it no ooner nor better.

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of be-oming as eminent as Thomas a Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see ıy birth-day inserted among the wonderful events, ı the Poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacks, long with the Black Monday, and the battle of

Bothwel bridge.—My lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man of the world. Through my lord's influence it is inserted in the records of the Caledonian hunt, that they universally, one and all, subscribe for the 2d edition.—My subscription bills come out to-morrow, and you shall have some of them next post.—I have met in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, what Solomon emphatically calls, 'A friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'—The warmth with which he interests himself in my affairs is of the same enthusiastic kind which you, Mr. Aiken, and the few patrons that took notice of my earlier poetic days, shewed for the poor unlucky devil of a poet.

I always remember Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy in my poetic prayers, but now both in-

No. 243.

TO DR. M'KENZIE, MAUCHLINE.

Inclosing him the Extempore Verses on dining with lord Daer.

Wednesday Morning.

DEAR SIR,

I NEVER spent an afternoon among great folks with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honour of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the professor.* I would be delighted to see him perform acts of kindness and friendship, though I were not the object; he does it with such a grace. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus—four parts Socrates—four parts Nathaniel—and two parts Shakespeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore but a little corrected since. They may entertain you a little with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as favour the performances of,

Dear Sir,

Your very humble Servant.

* Professor Dugald Stewart.

No. 244.

TO J. BALLANTINE, ESQ. BANKER, AYR.

Edinburgh, 13th Dec. 1786.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

I WOULD not write you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and my matters, which by the bye is often no easy task.—I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable head-ache and stomach complaint, but am now a good deal better.—I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly

—I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq. brother to the Justice Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him by invitation at his own house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two, next post; when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr. Aiken. I saw his son to day and he is very well.

Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called the Lounger,* a copy of which I here enclose you.—I was, Sir, when I was first honoured with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation.

I shall certainly, my ever honoured patron, write you an account of my every step; and better health and more spirits may enable me to make it something better than this stupid matter of fact epistle.

I have the honour to be,
Good Sir,
Your ever grateful humble servant.

If any of my friends write me, my direction is —care of Mr. Creech, bookseller.

* The paper here alluded to, was written by Mr. M'Kenzie, the celebrated author of the Man of Feeling.

No. 245.

TO MR. WM. CHALMERS, WRITER, AYR

Edinburgh, Dec. 27th, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CONFESS I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner; but of all men living, I had intended to send you an entertaining letter; and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding, conceited majesty, preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily-solemn oath this!—I am, and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write

saw as many wild beasts as I have seen since I came to Edinburgh; which, a circumstance not very uncommon in story-telling, brings me back to where I set out.

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered; I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck.

One blank in the address to Edinburgh—'Fair B——,' is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once.

There has not been any thing nearly like her, in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the Great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

My direction is—care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge-street.

No. 246.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

Edinburgh, Jan. 14th, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

IT gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie Gaw's Skate, 'past redemption;' for I have still this favourable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teazes me eternally till I do it.

I am still 'dark as was Chaos' in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr. Patrick Miller, has been talking with me about a lease of some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought near Dumfries. Some life-rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier any where than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr. Miller is no judge of land; and though I dare say he means to favour me, yet he may give me, in his opinion, an advantageous bargain, that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries, as I return, and have promised to meet Mr. Miller on his lands some time in May.

I went to a mason-lodge yesternight, where the most Worshipful-Grand Master Charters, and all the Grand-Lodge of Scotland visited—The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the dif-

I have to-day corrected my 152nd page. My best good wishes to Mr. Aiken.

I am ever,
Dear Sir,
Your much indebted humble Servant.

No. 247.

TO THE SAME.

WHILE here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound, Auld Toon o' Ayr, conjured up, I will send my last song to Mr. Ballantine.—Here it is—

'Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 479.

No. 248.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Feb. 24th, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

I WILL soon be with you now *in guid black prent;* in a week or ten days at farthest—I am obliged, against my own wish, to print sub-

scribers' names, so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription bills, they must be sent in to Creech directly.—I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver; and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my books, looking like other *fools* to my title page.

I have the honour to be,
Ever your grateful, &c.

No. 249.

TO MR. JAMES CANDLISH,

STUDENT IN PHYSIC, COLLEGE, GLASGOW

Edinburgh, March 21st, 1787.

which was to be demonstrated; that
le of reasoning, with a little affectation
ity, may mislead the best of hearts. I,
ince you and I were first acquainted,
e of despising old women's stories, ven-
the daring path Spinosa trod;' but ex-
f the weakness, not the strength, of
wers, made me glad to grasp at reveal-

stop, but don't impute my brevity to a
ıse. I am still, in the apostle Paul's
'he old man with his deeds,' as when
porting about the lady thorn. I shall
eeks here yet, at least; and so I shall
hear from you—welcome sense, wel-
ense.

n, with the warmest sincerity,

My dear old friend, Yours.

No. 250.

TO THE SAME.

EAR FRIEND,

' once I were gone through this scene
ınd dissipation, I promise myself the
f that correspondence being renewed
been so long broken. At present I
for nothing. Dissipation and business
ery moment. I am engaged in assist-
ıest Scots enthusiast, a friend of mine.

who is an engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste. I have collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen all the songs I could meet with. Pompey's Ghost, words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number: the first is already published. I shall shew you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a fortnight or less. Do be so kind as send me the song in a day or two: you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

Direct to me at Mr. W. Cruikshank's, St. James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh.

No. 251.

TO WM. CREECH, ESQ. (OF EDINBURGH), LONDON.

Selkirk, 13th May, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

THE inclosed I have just wrote, nearly extempore, in a solitary Inn, in Selkirk, after a miserable wet day's riding.—I have been over most of East Lothian, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirkshires; and next week I begin a tour through the north of England. Yesterday I dined

with lady Hariot, sister to my noble patron,* *Quem Deus conservet!* I would write till I would tire you as much with dull prose as I dare say by this time you are with wretched verse, but I am jaded to death; so, with a grateful farewell,

I have the honour to be,
Good Sir, yours sincerely.

'Auld chuckie *Reekie's* sair distrest,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 326.

No. 252.

TO MR. W. NICOL,

MASTER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

Carlisle, June 1*st*, 1787.

KIND HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE,

I'M sitten down here, after seven and forty miles ridin, e'en as forjesket and forniaw'd as a forfoughten cock, to gie you some notion o' my land-lowper-like stravaguin sin the sorrowfu' hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' *auld Reekie*.

My auld, ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchy-all'd up hill and down brae, in Scotland and England, as teugh and birnie as a verra devil wi' me.†

* James earl of Glencairn.

† This mare was the Poet's favourite *Jenny Geddes*, of whom *honourable* and most *humourous* mention is made in a letter, inserted in a former part of this work.

This old and faithful servant of the Poet's was named by him, after the old woman, who in her zeal against religious innova-

It's true, she's as poor's a sang maker and as hard's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate, first like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle, but she's a yauld, poutherie Girran for a' that, and has a stomack like Willie Stalker's meere that wad hae disgeested tumbler-wheels, for she'll whip me aff her five stimparts o' the best aits at a down-sittin and ne'er fash her thumb. When ance her ringbanes and spavies, her crucks and cramps, are fairly soupl'd, she beets to, beets to, and ay the hindmost hour the tightest. I could wager her price to a thretty pennies, that, for twa or three wooks ridin at fifty mile a day, the deil-sticket a five galloppers acqueesh Clyde and Whithorn could cast saut on her tail.

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dumbar to Soleraig, and hae forgather'd wi' mony a guid

thorn, and as sweet and modest's a new umrose in a hazle shaw. They were d to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane ad as muckle smeddum and rumblgum- e half o' some presbytries that you and I n. They play'd me sik a deevil o' a at I daur say if my harigals were turn'd vad see twa nicks i' the heart o' me like o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

gaun to write you a lang pystle, but, rgie me, I gat mysel sae notouriously the day after kail-time that I can hardly t and ben.

st respecks to the guidwife and a' our friens, especiall Mr. and Mrs. Cruik- d the honest guidman o' Jock's Lodge. in Dumfries the morn gif the beast be to and the branks bide hale.

Gude be wi' you, Willie!

Amen!—

No. 253.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, June 18th, 1787.

DEAR FRIEND,

I AM now arrived safe in my native after a very agreeable jaunt, and have ure to find all my friends well. I break- ith your grey-headed, reverend friend,

Mr. Smith; and was highly pleased, both with the cordial welcome he gave me, and his most excellent appearance and sterling good sense.

I have been with Mr. Miller at Dalswinton, and am to meet him again in August. From my view of the lands and his reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended; but still they are but slender.

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks—Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, Gude forgie me, I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account. Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good humour, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart; in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon.—Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for the walks of business; add to all, that, thoughtless follies and hair-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till, pop 'he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again.' God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me! but should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have in life, I have felt along the lines, and, d—n them! they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear Sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me 'through good report and bad report,' —the love which Solomon emphatically says, 'Is strong as death.' My compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

P. S. I shall be in Edinburgh about the latter end of July.

No. 254.

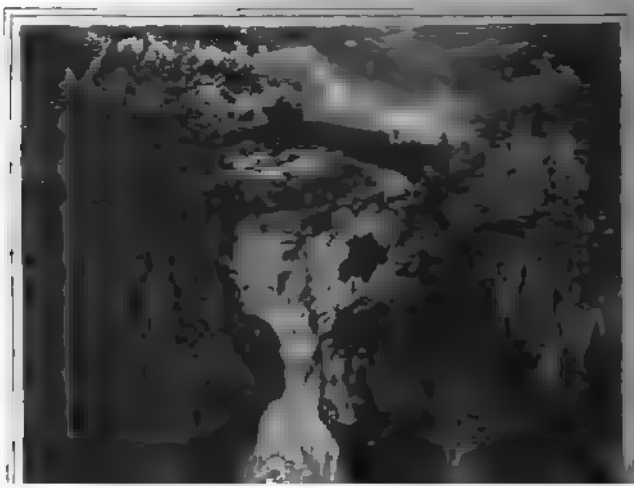
TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

Stirling, 28th August, 1787

MY DEAR SIR,

HERE am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich, fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly waving crops of wheat, barley, &c. but no harvest at all yet, except in one or two places, an old wife's ridge.—Yesterday morning I rode from this town up the meandring Devon's banks to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast, we made a party to go and see the famous Caudu-

FALLS OF FYERS.



ke, and particularly his manner, resemble you, he will still have a finer face. (I put in the d *still*, to please Mrs. Hamilton.) Good sense, desty, and at the same time a just idea of that ect that man owes to man, and has a right in turn to exact, are striking features in his cha- er; and, what with me is the Alpha and the ega he has a heart might adorn the breast of a t! Grace has a good figure and the look of lth and cheerfulness, but nothing else remark- e in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking keness as is between her and your little Been- ; the mouth and chin particularly. She is re- ved at first; but as we grew better acquainted, as delighted with the native frankness of her nner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Charlotte, I cannot speak in common terms of niration: she is not only beautiful, but lovely. r form is elegant; her features not regular, but y have the smile of sweetness and the settled nplacency of good nature in the highest degree: l her complexion, now that she has happily re- ered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Bur- 's. After the exercise of our riding to the ls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress.

——— 'Here pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say her body thought.'

r eyes are fascinating; at once expressive of d sense, tenderness, and a noble mind.

I do not give you all this account, my good , to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. ch relations the first peer in the realm might

own with pride; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks? I had a thousand questions to answer about you all: I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them that John* was so good a boy, and so fine a scholar, and that Willie was going on still very pretty; but I have it in commission to tell her from them that beauty is a poor silly bauble without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh, but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs. Chalmer, only lady M'Kenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat somewhat marr'd our enjoyment.

I shall not be in Ayrshire for four weeks. My most respectful compliments to Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Kennedy, and Doctor M'Kenzie. I shall probably write him from some stage or other.

I am ever, Sir,
Yours most gratefully.

No. 255.

TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS.

(NOW MRS. HAY, OF EDINBURGH.)

September 26th, 1787.

I SEND Charlottle the first number of the songs; I would not wait for the second num-

* This is the '*wee curlie Johnnie,*' mentioned in Burns's dedication to Gavin Hamilton, esq.

ber; I hate delays in little marks of friendship, as I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart. I am determined to pay Charlotte a poetic compliment, if I could hit on some glorious old Scotch air, in number second.* You will see a small attempt on a shred of paper in the book; but though Dr. Blacklock commended it very highly, I am not just satisfied with it myself. I intend to make it description of some kind: the whining cant of love, except in real passion, and by a masterly hand, is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant of old Father Smeaton, Whig-minister at Kilmaurs. Darts, flames, cupids, loves, graces, and all that farrago, are just a Mauchline * * * * —a senseless rabble.

I got an excellent poetic epistle yesternight from the old, venerable author of Tullochgorum, John of Badenyon, &c. I suppose you know he is a clergyman. It is by far the finest poetic compliment I ever got. I will send you a copy of it.

I go on Thursday or Friday to Dumfries to wait on Mr. Miller about his farms.—Do tell that to lady M'Kenzie, that she may give me credit for a little wisdom. 'I wisdom dwell with prudence.' What a blessed fire side! How happy should I be to pass a winter evening under their venerable roof! and smoke a pipe of tobacco, or drink water-gruel with them! What solemn, lengthened, laughter-quashing gravity of phiz! What sage remarks on the good-for-nothing sons and daughters of indiscretion and folly! And

* Of the Scots Musical Museum.

what frugal lessons, as we straightened the fireside circle, on the uses of the poker and tongs!

Miss N. is very well, and begs to be remembered in the old way to you. I used all my eloquence, all the persuasive flourishes of the hand, and heart-melting modulation of periods in my power, to urge her out to Harvieston, but all in vain. My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind. I have seen the day—but that is a 'tale of other years.'—In my conscience I believe that my heart has been so oft on fire that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night. I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship; I am charmed with the wild but graceful eccentricity of their motions, and—wish them good night. I mean this with

country. I am rather hopeless in it; but as my brother is an excellent farmer, and is, besides, an exceedingly prudent, sober man, (qualities which are only a younger brother's fortune in our family,) I am determined, if my Dumfries business fail me, to return into partnership with him, and at our leisure take another farm in the neighbourhood. I assure you I look for high compliments from you and Charlotte on this very sage instance of my unfathomable, incomprehensible wisdom. Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment, now compleated. The air is admirable: true old Highland. It was the tune of a Gælic song which an Inverness lady sung me when I was there; and I was so charmed with it that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing; for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first-rate; though I am convinced it is very well: and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies, it is not only *sincere* but *just*.

Here follows the song of 'the Banks of the Devon.'

See Poems, p. 443.

No. 257.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Nov. 21, 1787.

I HAVE one vexatious fault to the kindly-welcome, well filled sheet which I owe to your and Charlotte's goodness—it contains too much sense, sentiment, and good-spelling. It is impossible that even you two, whom I declare to my God, I will give credit for any degree of excellence the sex are capable of attaining; it is impossible you can go on to correspond at that rate; so like those who, Shenstone says, retire because they have made a good speech, I shall after a few letters hear no more of you. I insist that you shall

man—I would fondly be generous, and I wish to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. 'Some folk hae a hantle o' fauts, an' I'm but a ne'er-do-weel.'

Afternoon.—To close the melancholy reflections at the end of last sheet, I shall just add a piece of devotion, commonly known in Carrick, by the title of the 'Wabster's grace.'

'Some say we're thieves, and e'en sae are we,
Some say we lie, and e'en sae do we!
Gude forgie us, an' I hope sae will he!
——Up and to your looms, lads.'

No. 258.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Dec. 12th, 1787.

I AM here under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion; and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell and myself have formed a 'Quadruple Alliance' to guarantee the other. I got my fall on Saturday, and am getting slowly better.

I have taken tooth and nail to the bible, and am got through the five books of Moses, and half way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my book-binder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo bible in sheets, the best paper

and print in town; and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

I would give my best song to my worst enemy, I mean the merit of making it, to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit.

I inclose you a proof copy of the 'Banks of the Devon,' which present with my best wishes to Charlotte. The 'Ochel-hills,' you shall probably have next week for yourself. None of your fine speeches!

No. 259.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Dec. 19th, 1787.

amine-faced spectre, poverty; attended as he al-
ays is, by iron-fisted oppression, and leering
ontempt; but I have sturdily withstood his buf-
tings many a hard-laboured day already, and
ill my motto is—I DARE! My worst enemy is
oimême. I lie so miserably open to the inroads
nd incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-
ounted banditti, under the banners of imagina-
ion, whim, caprice, and passion; and the heavy
rmed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence and
ore-thought, move so very, very slow, that I am
lmost in a state of perpetual warfare, and alas!
requent defeat. There are just two creatures
hat I would envy, a horse in his wild state tra-
ersing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some
f the desart shores of Europe. The one has not
wish without enjoyment, the other has neither
ish nor fear.

No. 260.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, March 14th, 1788.

I KNOW, my ever dear friend, that you
ill be pleased with the news when I tell you, I
ave at last taken a lease of a farm. Yesternight
compleated a bargain with Mr. Miller, of Dal-
winton, for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks
f the Nith, between five and six miles above
Dumfries. I begin at Whitsunday to build a
ouse, drive lime, &c.. and heaven be my help!

for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business. I have discharged all the army of my former pursuits, fancies and pleasures; a motly host! and have literally and strictly retained only the ideas of a few friends, which I have incorporated into a life-guard. I trust in Dr. Johnson's observation, 'Where much is attempted, something is done.' Firmness both in sufferance and exertion, is a character I would wish to be thought to possess; and have always despised the whining yelp of complaint, and the cowardly, feeble resolve.

* * * * * *

Poor Miss K. is ailing a good deal this winter, and begged me to remember her to you the first time I wrote to you. Surely woman, amiable woman, is often made in vain! Too delicately formed for the rougher pursuits of ambition; too

No. 261.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, 7th April, 1788.

I AM indebted to you and Miss Nimmo
:tting me know Miss Kennedy. Strange!
apt we are to indulge prejudices in our judg-
s of one another! Even I, who pique my-
on my skill in marking characters; because I
oo proud of my character as a man, to be
ed in my judgment *for* glaring wealth; and
roud of my situation as a poor man to be
ed *against* squalid poverty; I was unac-
ited with Miss K.'s very uncommon worth.
m going on a good deal progressive in *mon*
d bût, the sober science of life. I have lately
: some sacrifices, for which, were I *viva voce*
you to paint the situation and recount the
mstances, you would applaud me.

No. 262.

TO THE SAME.

No date.

NOW for that wayward, unfortunate
, myself. I have broke measures with * * *
ast week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter.

He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me upon his honour that I should have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor d-mn-d, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride; hypochondriac imagination, agonizing sensibility, and bedlam passions!

'*I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to die!*' I had lately 'a hairbreadth 'scape in th' imminent deadly breach' of love too. Thank my stars I got off heart-whole, 'waur fley'd than hurt.'—*Interruption.*

I have this moment got a hint * * * * * * * * * I fear I am something like—undone—but I hope for the best. Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution! accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! You must not desert

No. 263.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Sunday.

TO-MORROW, my dear Madam, I leave Edinburgh.

* * * * * *

I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in, I could not find; and indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of the family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken. I have entered into the excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plait a Dieu,—et mon Roi.* I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not, at what door of fortune's palace shall we enter in; but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get any thing to do. I wanted *un bût,* which is a dangerous, and unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread, and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceeding life: besides, the commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends.

No. 264.

TO MISS M———N.

Saturday Noon, No. 2, St. James's Square, New-Town, Edinburgh.

HERE have I sat, my dear Madam, in the stony attitude of perplexed study for fifteen vexatious minutes, my head askew, bending over the intended card; my fixed eye insensible to the very light of day poured around; my pendulous goose-feather, loaded with ink, hanging over the future letter; all for the important purpose of writing a complimentary card to accompany your trinket.

Compliments is such a miserable Greenland expression; lies at such a chilly polar distance from the torrid zone of my constitution, that I cannot

No. 265.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

Edinburgh, Sunday Morning,
November 23d, 1787.

I BEG, my dear Sir, you would not make any appointment to take us to Mr. Ainslie's to night. On looking over my engagements, constitution, present state of my health, some little vexatious soul concerns, &c. I find I cannot sup abroad to-night.

I shall be in to-day till one o'clock, if you have a leisure hour.

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence.—You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of blue-devilism, and you laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my *good things*.—I don't know, upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God's world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now, in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may perhaps sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be

Your friend.

No. 266.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, Dec. 1787.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I JUST now have read yours. The poetic compliments I pay cannot be misunderstood. They are neither of them so particular as to point *you* out to the world at large; and the circle of your acquaintances will allow all I have said. Besides I have complimented you chiefly, almost solely, on your mental charms. Shall I be plain with you? I will; so look to it. Personal attractions, Madam, you have much above par; wit, understanding, and worth, you possess in the first class. This is a cursed flat way of telling you these truths, but let me hear no more of your sheepish timidity. I know the world a little. I know what they will say of my poems; by second sight I suppose: for I am seldom out in my conjectures; and you may believe me, my dear Madam, I would not run any risk of hurting you by an ill-judged compliment. I wish to show to the world, the odds between a poet's friends and those of simple prosemen. More for your information *both* the pieces go in. One of them, 'Where braving all the winter's harms,' is already set—the tune is Neil Gow's Lamentation for Abercarny; the other is to be set to an old Highland air in Daniel Dow's 'Collection of ancient Scots Music;' the name is *Ha a Chaillich air mo*

Dheidh. My treacherous memory has forgot every circumstance about *Les Incas*, only I think you mentioned them as being in C———'s possession. I shall ask him about it. I am afraid the song of 'Somebody' will come too late—as I shall, for certain, leave town in a week for Ayrshire, and from that to Dumfries, but there my hopes are slender. I leave my direction in town, so any thing, wherever I am, will reach me.

I saw your's to ——— it is not too severe, nor did he take it amiss. On the contrary, like a whipt spaniel, he talks of being with you in the Christmas days. Mr. ——— has given him the invitation, and he is determined to accept of it. O selfishness! he owns, in his sober moments, that from his own volatility of inclination, the circumstances in which he is situated and his knowledge of his father's disposition,—the whole affair is chimerical—yet he *will* gratify an idle *penchant*, at the enormous, cruel expence of perhaps ruining the peace of the very woman for whom he professes the generous passion of love! He is a gentleman in his mind and manners, *tant pis!*—He is a volatile school-boy: The heir of a man's fortune who well knows the value of two times two!

Perdition seize them and their fortunes, before they should make the amiable, the lovely ——— the derided object of their purse-proud contempt.

I am doubly happy to hear of Mrs. ———'s recovery, because I really thought all was over with her. There are days of pleasure yet awaiting her.

As I cam in by Glenap
I met with an aged woman;
She bade me cheer up my heart,
For the best o' my days was comin.'

No. 267.

TO MR MORISON, WRIGHT, MAUCHLINE.

Ellisland, Jan. 22d, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

NECESSITY obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plaistered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will at farthest, be the time beyond which I cannot stay in this

No. 268.

TO MR. JAMES SMITH,

AVON PRINTFIELD, LINLITHGOW.

Mauchline, April 28th, 1788.

BEWARE of your Strasburgh, my good Sir! Look on this as the opening of a correspondence like the opening of a twenty-four gun battery!

There is no understanding a man properly, without knowing sometimes of his previous ideas (that is to say, if the man has any ideas; for I know many who, in the animal-muster, pass for men, that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, 1 25—1.5—1.75, or some such fractional matter) so to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

'Bode a robe and wear it.'

Says the wise old Scots adage! I hate to presage ill-luck; and as my girl has been *doubly* kinder to me than even the best of women usually are to their partners of our sex, in similar circumstances, I reckon on twelve times a brace of children against I celebrate my twelfth wedding day:

these twenty-four will give me twenty-four gossippings, twenty-four christenings, (I mean one equal to two) and I hope, by the blessing of the God of my fathers, to make them twenty-four useful members of society, and twenty-four approven servants of their God! * * * * 'Light's heartsome,' quo' the wife, when she was stedling sheep. You see what a lamp I have hung up to lighten your paths, when you are idle enough to explore the combinations and relations of my ideas. 'Tis now as plain as a pike-staff, why a twenty-four gun battery was a metaphor I could readily employ.

Now for business.—I intend to present Mrs. Burns with a printed shawl, an article of which I dare say you have variety: 'tis my first present to her since I have *irrevocably* called her mine, and I have a kind of whimsical wish to get her the

No. 269.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Mauchline, May 26th, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM two kind of letters in your debt, but I have been from home, and horridly busy buying and preparing for my farming business: over and above the plague of my excise instructions, which this week will finish.

As I flatter my wishes that I forsee many future years correspondence between us, 'tis foolish to talk of excusing dull epistles: a dull letter may be a very kind one. I have the pleasure to tell you that I have been extremely fortunate in all my buyings and bargainings hitherto; Mrs. Burns not excepted; which title I now avow to the world. I am truly pleased with this last affair; it has indeed added to my anxieties for futurity, but it has given a stability to my mind and my resolutions, unknown before; and the poor girl has the most sacred enthusiasm of attachment to me, and has not a wish but to gratify my every idea of her deportment.

I am interrupted,

Farewell! my dear Sir.

No. 270.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, May 4th, 1788.

Written shortly after the poet's marriage.

MADAM,

TO jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger: My preservative from the first, is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honour, and her attachment to me; my antidote against the last, is my long and deep rooted affection for her.

In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress: and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regu-

No. 271.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, June 14th, 1788.

THIS is now the third day, my dearest
r, that I have sojourned in these regions; and
ring these three days you have occupied more
my thoughts than in three weeks preceding:
Ayrshire I have several *variations* of friend-
ip's compass, here it points invariably to the
le.—My farm gives me a good many uncouth
es and anxieties, but I hate the language of
mplaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says
ll—'Why should a living man complain?'
I have been lately much mortified with con-
mplating an unlucky imperfection in the very
ming and construction of my soul; namely, a
undering inaccuracy of her olfactory organs in
tting the scent of craft or design in my fellow
eatures. I do not mean any compliment to my
genuousness, or to hint that the defect is in con-
quence of the unsuspicious simplicity of con-
ious truth and honour: I take it to be, in some
ay or other, an imperfection in the mental
ght; or, metaphor apart, some modification of
ulness. In two or three small instances lately, I
ve been most shamefully out.
I have all along, hitherto, in the warfare of life,
een bred to arms among the light-horse—the
iquet-guards of fancy; a kind of Hussars and
lighlanders of the *Brain;* but I am firmly re-

solved to *sell out* of these giddy battalions, who have no ideas of a battle but fighting the foe, or of a siege but storming the town. Cost what it will, I am determined to buy in among the grave squadrons of heavy armed thought, or the artillery corps of plodding contrivance.

What books are you reading, or what is the subject of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession? You said something about religion in your last. I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire; but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being *well*-married: You have so much sense, and knowledge of human nature, that though you may not realise perhaps the ideas of romance, yet you will never be *ill-married*.

No. 272.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, June 30th, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I JUST now received your brief epistle; and to take vengeance on your laziness, I have, you see, taken a long sheet of writing paper, and have begun at the top of the page, intended to scribble on to the very last corner.

I am vext at that affair of the * * * but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death. I am concerned for the old fellow's exit, only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect—for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life, that the welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind benevolent animal, but he is dropt into such a needy situation here in this vexatious world, and has such a whoreson, hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food; that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others, that he may look properly to himself. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr. M—— for the profile of a Mr. H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did

I ever give Mr. M—— any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will *not* have any such profile in my possession.

I desired the carrier to pay you, but as I mentioned only 15s. to him, I will rather enclose you a guinea note. I have it not indeed to spare here, as I am only a sojourner in a strange land in this place; but in a day or two I return to Mauchline, and there I have the bank notes through the house like salt permits.

There is a great degree of folly in talking unnecessarily of one's private affairs. I have just now been interrupted by one of my new neighbours, who has made himself absolutely contemptible in my eyes, by his silly, garrulous pruriency. I know it has been a fault of my own too; but from this moment I abjure it, as I would the service of hell! Your poets, spendthrifts, and other

terminating in this present scene of existence, man has serious and interesting business on hand. Whether a man shall shake hands with welcome in the distinguished elevation of respect, or shrink from contempt in the abject corner of insignificance; whether he shall wanton under the tropic of plenty, at least enjoy himself in the comfortable latitudes of easy convenience, or starve in the arctic circle of dreary poverty; whether he shall rise in the manly consciousness of a self-approving mind, or sink beneath a galling load of regret and remorse—these are alternatives of the last moment.

You see how I preach. You used occasionally to sermonize too; I wish you would, in charity, favour me with a sheet full in your own way. I admire the close of a letter lord Bolingbroke writes to Dean Swift: 'Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely: make an effort to love me with all mine!' Humble servant, and all that trumpery, is now such a prostituted business, that honest friendship, in her sincere way, must have recourse to her primitive, simple, farewell!

No. 273.

TO MR. GEORGE LOCHART,

MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

Mauchline, July 18*th*, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM just going for Nithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my

rhyming things for you. The Miss Bailies I have seen in Edinburgh. 'Fair and lovely are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who would not praise Thee for these Thy gifts in Thy goodness to the sons of men!' It needed not your fine taste to admire them. I declare, one day I had the honour of dining at Mr. Bailie's, I was almost in the predicament of the children of Israel, when they could not look on Moses's face for the glory that shone in it when he descended from Mount Sinai.

I did once write a poetic address from the falls of Bruar to his grace of Athole, when I was in the Highlands. When you return to Scotland let me know, and I will send such of my pieces as please myself best.

I return to Mauchline in about ten days.

My compliments to Mr. Purden. I am, in truth, but at present in haste

I am here on my farm, busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose, they only know in graces, prayers, &c. and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiding webs—by the ell! As for the muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet. For my old capricious but good-natured hussy of a muse—

By banks of Nith I sat and wept
When Coila I thought on,
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow trees upon.

I am generally about half my time in Ayrshire with my 'darling Jean,' and then I, at *lucid intervals*, throw my horny fist across my be-cobwebbed lyre, much in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning wheel.

I will send you 'The Fortunate Shepherdess' as soon as I return to Ayrshire, for there I keep it with other precious treasure. I shall send it by a careful hand, as I would not for any thing it should be mislaid or lost. I do not wish to serve you from any benevolence, or other grave Christian virtue; 'tis purely a selfish gratification of my own feeling whenever I think of you.

* * * * * *

If your better functions would give you leisure to write me I should be extremely happy; that is to say, if you neither keep nor look for a regular correspondence. I hate the idea of being *obliged*

to write a letter. I sometimes write a friend twice a week, at other times once a quarter.

I am exceedingly pleased with your fancy in making the author you mention place a map of Iceland instead of his portrait before his works: 'Twas a glorious idea.

Could you conveniently do me one thing—Whenever you finish any head I could like to have a proof copy of it. I might tell you a long story about your fine genius; but as what every body knows cannot have escaped you, I shall not say one syllable about it.

No. 275.

TO MISS CHALMERS, EDINBURGH.

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much *a l'egard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness.—I can truly say, that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two, whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say more, but, so much as lady M'Kenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest, of human kind—unfortunate, even in the shades of life—When I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days, than I can do with almost any body I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child!—If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert.—I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a late, important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable licence or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLAINY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire, I married 'my Jean.' This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance perhaps; but I had a long and much-loved fellow creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite

tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress. I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnete homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse.—I must except also from this last, a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly; and all the ballads in the country, as she has (O the partial lover! you will cry) the finest 'wood note wild' I ever heard.—I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth

view, whatever disrespect you in common with the world, have for this business, I know you would approve of my idea.

I will make no apology, dear Madam, for this egotistic detail: I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at every thing dishonest, and the same scorn at every thing unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not EQUALS? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS?

When I may have an opportunity of sending you this Heaven only knows. Shenstone says, 'When one is confined idle within doors by bad weather, the best antidote against *cnnui* is, to read the letters of, or write to one's friends;' in that case then, if the weather continues thus, I may scrawl you half a quire.

I very lately, to wit, since harvest began, wrote a poem, not in imitation, but in the manner of Pope's Moral Epistles. It is only a short essay, just to try the strength of my muse's pinion in that way. I will send you a copy of it, when once I have heard from you. I have likewise been laying the foundation of some pretty large poetic works: how the superstructure will come on I leave to that great maker and marrer of projects—TIME. Johnson's collection of Scots songs

is going on in the third volume; and of consequence finds me a consumpt for a great deal of idle metre.—One of the most tolerable things I have done in that way, is, two stanzas that I made to an air, a musical gentleman* of my acquaintance composed for the anniversary of his wedding-day, which happens on the seventh of November. Take it as follows:

*'The day returns, my bosom burns,' &c.—*See *Poems*, p. 63.

I shall give over this letter for shame. If I should be seized with a scribbling fit, before this goes away, I shall make it another letter, and then you may allow your patience a week's respite between the two. I have not room for more than the old, kind, hearty, FAREWELL!

To make some amends, *ma chere Madame*, for dragging you on to this second sheet; and to

No. 276.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 27th Sep. 1788.

I HAVE received twins, dear Madam, more than once; but scarcely ever with more pleasure than when I received yours of the 12th. instant. To make myself understood; I had wrote to Mr. Graham, inclosing my poem addressed to him, and the same post which favoured me with yours, brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he had received mine; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was most polite or kind.

Your criticisms, my honoured benefactress, are truly the work of a *friend*. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed, caterpillar critic; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude, the pro and con of an author's merits; they are the judicious observations of animated friendship, selecting the beauties of the piece. I have just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning by three o'clock; for between my wife and my farm is just forty-six miles. As I jogged on in the dark, I was taken with a poetic fit as follows:

'Mrs. F—— of C——'s lamentation for the death of her son; an uncommonly promising youth of eighteen or nineteen years of age.'

'Fate gave the word, the arrow sped,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 484.

You will not send me your poetic rambles, but you see, I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your impromptus give me double pleasure; what falls from your pen, can neither be unentertaining in itself, nor indifferent to me.

The *one* fault you found, is just; but I cannot please myself in an emendation.

What a life of solicitude is the life of a parent! you interested me much in your young couple.

I would not take my folio paper for this epistle, and now I repent it. I am so jaded with my dirty long journey that I was afraid to drawl into the essence of dulness with any thing larger than a quarto, and so I must leave out another rhyme of this morning's manufacture.

I will pay the sapientipotent George most cheerfully, to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire.

business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country; and I am certain, posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly; and your name shall be immortal.

I am preparing a flaming preface for your third volume. I see every day new musical publications advertised; but what are they? Gaudy, hunted butterflies of a day, and then vanish for ever: but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of mine.

Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devotion? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as, whether she be rather black or fair, plump or thin, short or tall, &c. and chuse your air, and I shall task my muse to celebrate her.

No. 278.

TO DR. BLACKLOCK.

Mauchline, Nov. 15th, 1788.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

AS I hear nothing of your motions but that you are, or were, out of town, I do not know where this may find you, or whether it will find you at all. I wrote you a long letter, dated from the land of matrimony, in June; but either it had not found you, or, what I dread more, it found you or Mrs. Blacklock in too precarious a

state of health and spirits, to take notice of an idle packet.

I have done many little things for Johnson, since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and I have finished one piece, in the way of Pope's *Moral Epistles*; but from your silence, I have every thing to fear, so I have only sent you two melancholy things, which I tremble lest they should too well suit the tone of your present feelings.

In a fortnight I move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale; till then, my direction is at this place; after that period it will be at Ellisland, near Dumfries. It would extremely oblige me were it but half a line, to let me know how you are, and where you are.—Can I be indifferent to the fate of a man, to whom I owe so much? A man whom I not only esteem but venerate.

My warmest good wishes and most sincere

No. 279.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, Jan. 6th, 1789.

MANY happy returns of the season to you, my dear Sir! May you be comparatively happy up to your comparative worth among the sons of men; which wish would, I am sure, make you one of the most blest of the human race.

I do not know if passing a 'Writer to the signet' be a trial of scientific merit, or a mere business of friends and interest. However it be, let me quote you my two favourite passages, which though I have repeated them ten thousand times, still they rouse my manhood and steel my resolution like inspiration.

> ———On Reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man.
>
> *Young.*

> Hear, Alfred, hero of the state,
> Thy genius heaven's high will declare;
> The triumph of the truly great
> Is never, never to despair!
> Is never to despair!
>
> *Masque of Alfred.*

I grant you enter the lists of life, to struggle for bread, business, notice, and distinction, in common with hundreds.—But who are they? Men, like yourself, and of that aggregate body, your compeers, seven tenths of them come short of your advantages natural and accidental; while

two of those that remain either neglect their parts, as flowers blooming in a desart, or mispend their strength, like a bull goring a bramble bush.

But to change the theme: I am still catering for Johnson's publication; and among others, I have brushed up the following old favourite song a little, with a view to your worship. I have only altered a word here and there; but if you like the humour of it, we shall think of a stanza or two to add to it.

* * * * * *

No. 280.

TO MR. JAMES HAMILTON,

GROCER, GLASGOW.

Among some distressful emergencies that I have experienced in life, I ever laid this down as my foundation of comfort—*That he who has lived the life of an honest man, has by no means lived in vain!*

With every wish for your welfare and future success,

I am, my dear Sir,
Sincerely yours.

No. 281.

TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ.

Ellisland, May 30th, 1789.

SIR,

I HAD intended to have troubled you with a long letter, but at present the delightful sensations of an omnipotent tooth-ache so engross all my inner man, as to put it out of my power even to write nonsense.—However, as in duty bound, I approach my bookseller with an offering in my hand—a few poetic clinches and a song:—To expect any other kind of offering from the RHYMING TRIBE, would be to know them much less than you do. I do not pretend that there is much merit in these *morceaux*, but I have two reasons for sending them; *primo*, they are mostly ill-natured, so are in unison with my present feelings, while fifty troops of infernal spirits are driving post from ear to ear along my jaw-bones; and *secondly*, they are so short, that you cannot

leave off in the middle, and so hurt my pride in the idea that you found any work of mine too heavy to get through.

I have a request to beg of you, and I not only beg of you, but conjure you—by all your wishes and by all your hopes, that the muse will spare the satiric wink in the moment of your foibles: that she will warble the song of rapture round your hymeneal couch; and that she will shed on your turf the honest tear of elegiac gratitude! grant my request as speedily as possible.—Send me by the very first fly or coach for this place, three copies of the last edition of my poems; which place to my account.

Now, may the good things of prose, and the good things of verse, come among thy hands until they be filled with the *good things of this life!* prayeth ROBERT BURNS.

of poems by a lady put into my hands, to prepare them for the press; which horrid task, with sowing my corn with my own hand, a parcel of masons, wrights, plaisterers, &c. to attend to, roaming on business through Ayrshire—all this was against me, and the very first dreadful article was of itself too much for me.

13th. I have not had a moment to spare from incessant toil since the 8th. Life, my dear Sir, is a serious matter. You know, by experience, that a man's individual self is a good deal; but believe me, a wife and family of children, whenever you have the honour to be a husband and a father, will shew you that your present most anxious hours of solicitude are spent on trifles. The welfare of those who are very dear to us, whose only support, hope and stay we are—this, to a generous mind, is another sort of more important object of care than any concerns whatever which centre merely in the individual. On the other hand, let no young, unmarried, rake-helly dog among you, make a song of his pretended liberty and freedom from care. If the relations we stand in to king, country, kindred, and friends, be any thing but the visionary fancies of dreaming metaphysicians; if religion, virtue, magnanimity, generosity, humanity and justice, be aught but empty sounds; then the man who may be said to live only for others, for the beloved, honourable female, whose tender, faithful embrace endears life, and for the helpless little innocents, who are to be the men and women, the worshippers of his God, the subjects of his king, and the support, nay, the very vital existence of his COUNTRY, in the ensuing

age;—compare such a man with any fellow whatever, who, whether he bustle and push in business among labourers, clerks, statesmen; or whether he roar and rant, and drink and sing in taverns—a fellow over whose grave no one will breathe a single heigh-ho, except from the cobweb-tie of what is called good fellowship—who has no view nor aim but what terminates in himself—if there be any grovelling earthborn wretch of our species, a renegado to common sense, who would fain believe that the noble creature, man, is no better than a sort of fungus, generated out of nothing, nobody knows how, and soon dissipating in nothing, nobody knows where; such a stupid beast, such a crawling reptile, might balance the foregoing unexaggerated comparison, but no one else would have the patience.

Forgive me, my dear Sir, for this long silence.

skies in the full persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent.—Yesternight, until a very late hour, did I wait with anxious horror, for the appearance of some comet firing half the sky; or aerial armies of sanguinary Scandinavians, darting athwart the startled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning, and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations.

The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly: they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the day.—For me, as Thomson in his Winter says of the storm—I shall 'Hear astonished, and astonished sing.'

The whistle and the man; I sing
The man that won the whistle, &c.

'Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys I trow are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold coward loun is he:
Wha *last** beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king amang us three.'

To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose.—I have some misgivings that I take too much upon me, when I request you to get your guest, Sir Robert Lowrie, to frank the two inclosed covers for me; the one of

* In former editions of these verses, the word *first* has been printed in this place instead of the word *last*.

them, to Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, bart. at Auchenskeith, Kilmarnock,—the other, to Mr. Allan Masterton, writing-master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on Sir Robert, as being a brother baronet, and likewise a keen foxite; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius: so, allow me to say, he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them to the post to-night.—I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow,

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your deeply indebted humble Servant.

they would be the finest poems in the language. —As they are, they will at least be a testimony with what sincerity I have the honour to be,

Sir, Your devoted humble Servant.

No. 285.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, Nov. 1st, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAD written you long ere now, could I have guessed where to find you, for I am sure you have more good sense than to waste the precious days of vacation time in the dirt of business and Edinburgh.—Wherever you are, God bless you, and lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil!

I do not know if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. In this I was extremely lucky. Without ever having been an expectant, as they call their journeyman excisemen, I was directly planted down to all intents and purposes an officer of excise; there to flourish and bring forth fruits—worthy of repentance.

I know not how the word exciseman, or still more opprobrious, gauger, will sound in your ears. I too have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this sub-

ject; but a wife and children are things which have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow is no bad settlement for a *poet*. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting serjeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable audience, in the streets of Kilmarnock.—'Gentleman, for your further and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown, and consequently, with us an honest fellow has the surest chance for preferment.'

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence in the most favourable situations does not abound with pleasures, and [illegible]

That you may be both the one and the other is the earnest wish, and that you *will* be both is the firm persuasion of,

My dear Sir, &c.

No. 286.

TO MR. PETER HILL,

BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, Feb. 2d, 1790.

NO! I will not say one word about apologies or excuses for not writing—I am a poor, rascally, gauger, condemned to gallop at least 200 miles every week to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels; and where can I find time to write to, or importance to interest any body? The upbraidings of my conscience, nay, the upbraidings of my wife, have persecuted me on your account these two or three months past.—I wish to God I was a great man, that my correspondence might throw light upon you, to let the world see what you really are; and then I would make your fortune, without putting my hand in my pocket for you, which, like all other great men, I suppose I would avoid as much as possible. What are you doing, and how are you doing? Have you lately seen any of my few friends? What is become of the BOROUGH REFORM, or how is the fate of my poor namesake Mademoiselle Burns decided? O man! but for thee and thy selfish appetites, and dishonest

artifices, that beauteous form, and that once innocent and still ingenuous mind, might have shone conspicuous and lovely in the faithful wife, and the affectionate mother; and shall the unfortunate sacrifice to thy pleasures have no claim on thy humanity!

I saw lately in a Review, some extracts from a new poem, called the Village Curate; send it me. I want likewise a cheap copy of the World. Mr. Armstrong, the young poet, who does me the honour to mention me so kindly in his works, please give him my best thanks for the copy of his book—I shall write him my first leisure hour. I like his poetry much, but I think his style in prose quite astonishing.

* * * * * *

Your book came safe, and I am going to trouble you with farther commissions. I call it troubling

the names of the first artists in London.—You will know the character of the performance, as some numbers of it are published; and if it is really what it pretends to be, set me down as a subscriber, and send me the published numbers.

Let me hear from you your first leisure minute, and trust me, you shall in future have no reason to complain of my silence. The dazzling perplexity of novelty will dissipate and leave me to pursue my course in the quiet path of methodical routine.

No. 287.

TO MR. W. NICOL.

Ellisland, Feb. 9th, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,

THAT d-mn-d mare of yours is dead. I would freely have given her price to have saved her: she has vexed me beyond description. Indebted as I was to your goodness, beyond what I can ever repay, I eagerly grasped at your offer to have the mare with me. That I might at least shew my readiness in wishing to be grateful, I took every care of her in my power. She was never crossed for riding above half a score of times by me, or in my keeping. I drew her in the plough, one of three, for one poor week. I refused fifty-five shillings for her, which was the highest bode I could squeeze for her. I fed her up, and had her in fine order for Dumfries fair;

when four or five days before the fair, she was seized with an unaccountable disorder in the sinews, or somewhere in the bones of the neck: with a weakness or total want of power in her fillets; and, in short, the whole vertebræ of her spine seemed to be diseased and unhinged, and in eight and forty hours, in spite of the two best farriers in the country, she died, and be d-mn-d to her! The farriers said that she had been quite strained in the fillets, beyond cure, before you had bought her, and that the poor devil, though she might keep a little flesh, had been jaded and quite worn out with fatigue and oppression. While she was with me, she was under my own eye; and I assure you, my much valued friend, every thing was done for her that could be done, and the accident has vexed me to the heart. In fact, I could not pluck up spirits to write you, on

more might have been got if wanted. The manager, Mr. Sutherland, was introduced to me by a friend from Ayr; and a worthier or cleverer fellow I have rarely met with. Some of our clergy have slipt in by stealth now and then; but they have got up a farce of their own. You must have heard how the Rev. Mr. Lawson of Kirkmahoe, seconded by the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate and Rev. Mr. Heron of Kirkgunzeon, that in ordaining Mr. Nelson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he, the said Heron, feloniously and treasonably bound the said Nelson to the confession of faith, *so far as it was agreeable to reason and the word of God!*

Mrs. B. begs to be remembered most gratefully to you. Little Bobby and Frank are charmingly well and healthy. I am jaded to death with fatigue. For these two or three months, on an average, I have not ridden less than two hundred miles per week. I have done little in the poetic way. I have given Mr. Sutherland two prologues: one of which was delivered last week. I have likewise strung four or five barbarous stanzas, to the tune of Chevy Chase, by way of elegy on your poor unfortunate mare, beginning (the name she got here was Peg Nicholson)

'Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare.'—*See Poems, p. 325.*

My best compliments to Mrs. Nichol, and little Neddy, and all the family. I hope Ned is a good scholar, and will come out to gather nuts and apples with me next harvest.

No. 288.

TO MR. MURDOCH,

TEACHER OF FRENCH, LONDON.

Ellisland, July 16th, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED a letter from you a long time ago, but unfortunately, as it was in the time of my peregrinations and journeyings through Scotland, I mislaid or lost it, and by consequence your directions along with it. Luckily my good star brought me acquainted with Mr. Kennedy, who, I understand, is an acquaintance of yours: and by his means and mediation I hope to replace that link which my unfortunate negligence had

. The next letter I write you shall be a long one. I have much to tell you of 'hair-breadth 'scapes in th' imminent deadly breach,' with all the eventful history of a life, the early years of which owed so much to your kind tutorage; but this at an hour of leisure. My kindest compliments to Mrs. Murdoch and family.

I am ever, my dear Sir,
Your obliged friend.

No. 289.

TO CRAUFORD TAIT, ESQ. EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, Oct. 15th, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

ALLOW me to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer, Mr. William Duncan, a friend of mine, whom I have long known and long loved. His father, whose only son he is, has a decent little property in Ayrshire, and has bred the young man to the law, in which department he comes up an adventurer to your good town. I shall give you my friend's character in two words: as to his head, he has talents enough, and more than enough for common life; as to his heart, when nature had kneaded the kindly clay that composes it, she said, 'I can no more.'

You, my good Sir, were born under kinder stars; but your fraternal sympathy, I well know, can enter into the feelings of the young man, who goes into life with the laudable ambition to *do*

something, and to *be* something among his fellow-creatures; but whom the consciousness of friendless obscurity presses to the earth, and wounds to the soul!

Even the fairest of his virtues are against him. That independent spirit, and that ingenuous modesty, qualities inseparable from a noble mind, are, with the million, circumstances not a little disqualifying. What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and the happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of such depressed youth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse:—The goods of this world cannot be divided, without being lessened—but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow-creature, yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment? We wrap ourselves up in the cloak

sideration of getting a place; but at all events, your notice and acquaintance will be a very great acquisition to him; and I dare pledge myself that he will never disgrace your favour.'

You may possibly be surprised, Sir, at such a letter from me; 'tis, I own, in the usual way of calculating these matters, more than our acquaintance entitles me to; but my answer is short: Of all the men at your time of life, whom I knew in Edinburgh, you are the most accessible on the side on which I have assailed you. You are very much altered indeed from what you were when I knew you, if generosity point the path you will not tread, or humanity call to you in vain.

As to myself, a being to whose interest I believe you are still a well-wisher; I am here, breathing at all times, thinking sometimes, and rhyming now and then. Every situation has its share of the cares and pains of life, and my situation, I am persuaded, has a full ordinary allowance of its pleasures and enjoyments.

My best compliments to your father and Miss Tait. If you have an opportunity, please remember me in the solemn league and covenant of friendship to Mrs. Lewis Hay. I am a wretch for not writing her; but I am so hackneyed with self-accusation in that way; that my conscience lies in my bosom with scarce the sensibility of an oyster in its shell. Where is lady M'Kenzie? wherever she is, God bless her! I likewise beg leave to trouble you with compliments to Mr. William Hamilton; Mrs. Hamilton and family; and Mrs. Chalmers, when you are in that country.

Should you meet with Miss Nimmo, please remember me kindly to her.

No. 290.

TO ——

DEAR SIR,

WHETHER in the way of my trade, I can be of any service to the Rev. Doctor,* is I fear very doubtful. Ajax's shield consisted, I think, of seven bull hides and a plate of brass, which altogether set Hector's utmost force at defiance. Alas! I am not a Hector, and the worthy Doctor's foes are as securely armed as Ajax was. Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, stupidity, malevolence, self-conceit, envy—all strongly bound in a massy frame of brazen impudence. Good God, Sir! to such a shield, humour is the peck of a sparrow, and satire the pop-gun of a schoolboy. Creation-disgracing *scelerats* such as they, God can only mend, and the Devil only can punish. In the comprehending way of Caligula, I wish they had all but one neck. I feel impotent as a child to the ardour of my wishes! O for a withering curse, to blast the germins of their wicked machinations. O for a poisonous Tornado, winged from the Torrid Zone of Tartarus, to sweep the spreading crop of their villainous contrivances to the lowest hell!

* Dr. M'Gill, of Ayr.

No. 291.

TO MR. ALEXANDER DALZIEL,

FACTOR, FINDLAYSTON.

Ellisland, March 19th, 1791.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE taken the liberty to frank this letter to you, as it incloses an idle poem of mine, which I send you; and, God knows, you may perhaps pay dear enough for it, if you read it through. Not that this is my own opinion; but an author, by the time he has composed and corrected his works, has quite pored away all his powers of critical discrimination.

I can easily guess from my own heart, what you have felt on a late most melancholy event. God knows what I have suffered, at the loss of my best friend, my first, my dearest patron and benefactor; the man to whom I owe all that I am and have! I am gone into mourning for him, and with more sincerity of grief than I fear some will, who by nature's ties ought to feel on the occasion.

I will be exceedingly obliged to you indeed, to let me know the news of the noble family, how the poor mother and the two sisters support their loss. I had a packet of poetic bagatelles ready to send to lady Betty, when I saw the fatal tidings in the newspaper. I see by the same channel that the honoured REMAINS of my noble patron, are designed to be brought to the family burial place.

Dare I trouble you to let me know privately before the day of interment, that I may cross the country, and steal among the crowd, to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression.

No. 292.

TO MR. THOMAS SLOAN,

CARE OF WM. KENNEDY, ESQ. MANCHESTER.

Ellisland, Sep. 1st, 1791

MY DEAR SLOAN,

SUSPENCE is worse than disappointment; for that reason I hurry to tell you, that I just now learn that Mr. Ballantine does not [illegible]

——'On Reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.—

And that other favourite one from Thomson's Alfred—

'What proves the hero truly great,
Is, never, never to despair.'

Or, shall I quote you an author of your acquaintance?

'—Whether doing, suffering, or forbearing,
You may do miracles by—persevering.'

I have nothing new to tell you. The few friends we have are going on in the old way. I sold my crop on this day se'nnight, and sold it very well. A guinea an acre, on an average, above value. But such a scene of drunkenness was hardly ever seen in this country. After the roup was over, about thirty people engaged in a battle, every man for his own hand, and fought it out for three hours. Nor was the scene much better in the house. No fighting, indeed, but folks lying drunk on the floor, and decanting, until both my dogs got so drunk, by attending them, that they could not stand. You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene; as I was no farther over than you used to see me.

Mrs. B. and family have been in Ayrshire these many weeks.

Farewell! and God bless you, my dear friend!

No. 293.

TO FRANCIS GROSE, ESQ. F. A. S.

1792

SIR,

I BELIEVE among all our Scots literati you have not met with professor Dugald Stewart, who fills the moral philosophy chair in the university of Edinburgh. To say that he is a man of the first parts, and what is more, a man of the first worth, to a gentleman of your general acquaintance, and who so much enjoys the luxury of unincumbered freedom and undisturbed privacy, is not perhaps recommendation enough: but when I inform you that Mr. Stewart's principal characteristic is your favourite feature; that

quitted myself of my promise. Should your time and spirits permit your meeting with Mr. Stewart, 'tis well; if not, I hope you will forgive this liberty, and I have at least an opportunity of assuring you with what truth and respect,

I am, Sir,

Your great admirer, and very humble servant.

No. 294.

TO THE SAME.

SIR,

AMONG the many witch stories I have heard relating to Alloway kirk, I distinctly remember only two or three.

Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind, and bitter blasts of hail; in short, on such a night as the devil would chuse to take the air in; a farmer or farmer's servant was plodding and plashing homeward with his plough irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighbouring smithy. His way lay by the kirk of Alloway, and being rather on the anxious look out, in approaching a place so well known to be a favourite haunt of the devil and the devil's friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering through the horrors of the storm and stormy night, a light, which on his near approach, plainly shewed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice. Whether he had been fortified from above, on his devout supplication,

as is customary with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan: or whether, according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not pretend to determine; but so it was, that he ventured to go up to, nay into the very kirk. As good luck would have it, his temerity came off unpunished.

The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other, and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle or caldron, depending from the roof, over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of executed malefactors, &c. for the business of the night.—It was, in for a penny, in for a pound, with the honest ploughman: so, without ceremony, he unhooked the caldron from off the fire, and poured out the damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head, and carried it fairly home, where it

vanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirk-yard, he was surprised and entertained, through the ribs and arches of an old gothic window, which still faces the high-way, to see a dance of witches, merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighbourhood. How the gentleman was dressed, tradition does not say; but the ladies were all in their smocks: and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purpose of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled, that he involuntarily burst out, with a loud laugh, 'Weel luppen Maggy wi' the short sark!' and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally known fact, that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for notwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge, and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing, vengeful hags, were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprung to seize him; but it was too late, nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning; but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly, tail-less condition of the vigorous steed was to the

last hour of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmers, not to stay too late in Ayr markets.

The last relation I shall give, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former, with regard to the scene: but as the best authorities give it for Alloway, I shall relate it.

On a summer's evening, about the time that nature puts on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a shepherd boy, belonging to a farmer in the immediate neighbourhood of Alloway kirk, had just folded his charge, and was returning home. As he passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crew of men and women, who were busy pulling stems of the plant Ragwort. He observed, that as each person pulled a Ragwort, he or she got astride of it, and called out, 'up, horsie!' on which the Ragwort flew

that understood Scotch, asking him what he was, he said he was such-a-one's herd in Alloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived long to tell the world the wondrous tale.

I am, &c. &c.

No. 295.

TO R. GRAHAM, ESQ. FINTRY.

December, 1792.

SIR,

I HAVE been surprised, confounded, and distracted, by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your board to enquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government. Sir, you are a husband—and a father.—You know what you would feel, to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas, Sir! must I think that such, soon, will be my lot! and from the d-mn-d, dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy too! I believe, Sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head; and I say, that the allegation, whatever villain has

made it, is a lie! To the British constitution, on revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached! You, Sir, have been much and generously my friend.—Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you.—Fortune, Sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent; has given you patronage, and me dependance.—I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity: were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin; for at the worst, 'Death's thousand doors stand open:' but, good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage, and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allotted

B. some time ago did himself the honour of writing Mr. C. respecting coming out to the country, to give a little musical instruction in a highly respectable family, where Mr. C. may have his own terms, and may be as happy as indolence, the devil, and the gout, will permit him. Mr. B. knows well how Mr. C. is engaged with another family; but cannot Mr. C. find two or three weeks to spare to each of them? Mr. B. is deeply impressed with, and awfully conscious of, the high importance of Mr. C.'s time, whether in the winged moments of symphonious exhibition, at the keys of harmony, while listening seraphs cease their own less delightful strains;—or in the drowsy hours of slumb'rous repose, in the arms of his dearly-beloved elbow-chair, where the frowsy, but potent power of indolence, circumfuses her vapours round, and sheds her dews on, the head of her darling son.—But half a line, conveying half a meaning, from Mr. C. would make Mr. B. the very happiest of mortals.

No. 297.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Dec. 31st, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,

A HURRY of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgments to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for

that hospitable kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof, four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed.—Alas, my dearest friend! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures! On my road to Ayrshire, I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued, a man whose days promised to be many; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust!

Jan. 2d, 1793.

I HAVE just received yours of the 30th, and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself, I am better, though not quite free of my complaint.—You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against

cal principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips, as to these unlucky politics; but to you, I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in every thing else, I shall shew the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate: misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But * * * *

The remainder of this letter has been torn away by some barbarous hand.

No. 298.

TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ.

OF DALSWINTON.

April, 1793.

Sir,

My poems having just come out in another edition, will you do me the honour to accept of a copy? A mark of my gratitude to you, as a gentleman to whose goodness I have been much indebted; of my respect for you, as a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country; and of my veneration for you, as a man, whose benevolence of heart does honour to human nature.

There *was* a time, Sir, when I was your dependant: this language *then* would have been like the vile incense of flattery—I could not have

used it.—Now that connection is at an end, do me the honour to accept of this *honest* tribute of respect from, Sir,

Your much indebted, humble Servant

No. 299.

TO JOHN FRANCIS ERSKINE, ESQ. OF MAR

Dumfries, 13th April, 179-

SIR,

DEGENERATE as human nature is said to be, and, in many instances, worthless and unprincipled it is, still there are bright examples to the contrary—examples that, even in the eyes of superior beings, must shed a lustre on the name

and generous friend, I had, without so much as a hearing, or the slightest previous intimation, been turned adrift, with my helpless family, to all the horrors of want. Had I had any other resource, probably I might have saved them the trouble of a dismission; but the little money I gained by my publication, is almost every guinea embarked, to save from ruin an only brother, who, though one of the worthiest is by no means one of the most fortunate of men.

In my defence to their accusations I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I abjured the idea—That a CONSTITUTION, which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory;—that, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally, or as an author, in the present business of REFORM. But that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say, there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious CONSTITUTION, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended. —Some such sentiments as these I stated in a letter to my generous patron, Mr. Graham, which he laid before the board at large; where, it seems, my last remark gave great offence; and one of our supervisors general, a Mr. Corbet, was instructed to inquire on the spot, and to document

me—'that my business was to act, *not to think:* and that whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be *silent* and *obedient*.'

Mr. Corbet was likewise my steady friend; so, between Mr. Graham and him, I have been partly forgiven; only I understand, that all hopes of my getting officially forward, are blasted.

Now, Sir, to the business in which I would more immediately interest you. The partiality of my COUNTRYMEN has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the POET, I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I trust will be found in the MAN. Reasons, of no less weight than the support of a wife and family, have pointed out as the eligible, and, situated as I was, the only eligible line of life for me, my present occupation. Still my honest fame is my dearest con-

In your illustrious hands, Sir, permit me to lodge my disavowal and defiance of these slanderous falsehoods.—BURNS was a poor man from birth, and an exciseman by necessity: but—*I will* say it! the sterling of his honest worth, no poverty could debase; and his independent British mind, oppression might bend, but could not subdue. Have not I, to me, a more precious stake in my country's welfare, than the richest dukedom in it? I have a large family of children, and the prospect of many more. I have three sons, who, I see already, have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES. Can I look tamely on, and see any machination to wrest from them the birth-right of my boys, the little independent BRITONS, in whose veins runs my own blood?—No! I will not! should my heart's blood stream around my attempt to defend it!

Does any man tell me, that my full efforts can be of no service; and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concern of a nation?

I can tell him, that it is on such individuals as I that a nation has to rest, both for the hand of support, and the eye of intelligence. The uninformed MOB may swell a nation's bulk; and the titled, tinsel, courtly throng, may be its feathered ornament; but the number of those who are elevated enough in life to reason and to reflect, yet low enough to keep clear of the venal contagion of a court—these are a nation's strength.

I know not how to apologize for the impertinent length of this epistle; but one small request

I must ask of you farther—When you have honoured this letter with a perusal, please to commit it to the flames. BURNS, in whose behalf you have so generously interested yourself, I have here, in his native colours drawn *as he is*: but should any of the people in whose hand is the very bread he eats, get the least knowledge of the picture, *it would ruin the poor* BARD *for ever!*

My poems having just come out in another edition, I beg leave to present you with a copy, as a small mark of that high esteem and ardent gratitude, with which I have the honour to be,

Sir, your deeply indebted,

And ever devoted humble Servant.

No. 300.

rode in will-o'-wisp, or, in her more classic phrase, SPUNKIE, were looking over my elbow.—Happy thought that idea has engendered in my head! SPUNKIE—thou shalt henceforth be my symbol, signature, and tutelary genius! Like thee, hap-step-and lowp, here-awa-there-awa, higglety, piggelty, pell-mell, hither-and-yon, ram-stam, happy-go-lucky, up tails-a'-by-the-light-o'-the-moon; has been, is, and shall be, my progress through the mosses and moors of this vile, bleak, barren wilderness of a life of ours.

Come then, my guardian spirit; like thee, may I skip away, amusing myself by and at my own light: and if any opaque-souled lubber of mankind complain that my elfine, lambent, glimmerous wanderings have misled his stupid steps over precipices, or into bogs; let the thick headed blunderbuss recollect, that he is not SPUNKIE:—that

> Spunkie's wanderings could not copied be;
> Amid these perils none durst walk but he.—

* * * * * *

I have no doubt but scholarcraft may be caught as a Scotsman catches the itch,—by friction. How else can you account for it, that born blockheads, by mere dint of *handling* books, grow so wise that even they themselves are equally convinced of, and surprised at their own parts? I once carried this philosophy to that degree, that in a knot of country folks, who had a library amongst them, and who, to the honour of their good sense, made me factotum in the business; one of our members, a little, wise-looking, squat,

upright, jabbering body of a taylor. I advised him, instead of turning over the leaves, to *bind the book on his back*.—Johnnie took the hint; and as our meetings were every fourth Saturday, and prick-louse, having a good Scots mile to walk, in coming, and, of course, another in returning, bodkin was sure to lay his hands on some heavy quarto, or ponderous folio; with, and under which, wrapt up in his grey plaid, he grew wise, as he grew weary, all the way home. He carried this so far, that an old musty Hebrew concordance, which we had in a present from a neighbouring priest, by mere dint of applying it, as doctors do a blistering plaister, between his shoulders, stitch, in a dozen pilgrimages, acquired as much rational theology as the said priest had done by forty years perusal of the pages.

Tell me, and tell me truly, what you think of this theory. Yours

ner of descriptive TRUTH.—Flattery, I leave to your LOVERS, whose exaggerating fancies may make them imagine you still nearer perfection than you really are.

Poets, Madam, of all mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of BEAUTY; as, if they are really POETS of nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate than most of the world. In the cheerful bloom of SPRING, or the pensive mildness of AUTUMN; the grandeur of SUMMER, or the hoary majesty of WINTER; the poet feels a charm unknown to the rest of his species. Even the sight of a fine flower, or the company of a fine woman, (by far the finest part of God's works below) have sensations for the poetic heart that the HERD of man are strangers to.—On this last account, Madam, I am, as in many other things, indebted to Mr. Hamilton's kindness in introducing me to you. Your lovers may view you with a wish, I look on you with pleasure; their hearts, in your presence, may glow with desire, mine rises with admiration.

That the arrows of misfortune, however they should, as incident to humanity, glance a slight wound, may never reach your *heart*—that the snares of villainy may never beset you in the road of life—that INNOCENCE may hand you by the path of HONOUR to the dwelling of PEACE, is the sincere wish of him who has the honour to be, &c.

No. 302.

TO LADY GLENCAIRN.

My Lady,

THE honour you have done your poor poet, in writing him so very obliging a letter, and the pleasure the inclosed beautiful verses have given him, came very seasonably to his aid amid the cheerless gloom and sinking despondency of diseased nerves and December weather. As to forgetting the family of Glencairn, heaven is my witness with what sincerity I could use those old verses, which please me more in their rude simplicity than the most elegant lines I ever saw.

If thee Jerusalem I forget,
Skill part from my right hand.—

My tongue to my mouth's roof let cleave,
If I do thee forget,
Jerusalem, and thee above
My chief joy do not set.—

When I am tempted to do any thing improper, I dare not, because I look on myself as accountable to your ladyship and family. Now and then, when I have the honour to be called to the tables of the great, if I happen to meet with any mortification from the stately stupidity of self-sufficient squires, or the luxuriant insolence of upstart nabobs, I get above the creatures by calling to remembrance that I am patronised by the noble house of Glencairn; and at gala-times, such as New-year's day, a christening, or the kirn-night,

when my punch bowl is brought from its dusty corner, and filled up in honour of the occasion, I begin with,—*The countess of Glencairn!* My good woman, with the enthusiasm of a grateful heart, next cries, *My lord!* and so the toast goes on, until I end with *lady Harriet's little angel!* whose epithalamium I have pledged myself to write.

When I received your ladyship's letter, I was just in the act of transcribing for you some verses I have lately composed; and meant to have sent them my first leisure hour, and acquainted you with my late change of life. I mentioned to my lord, my fears concerning my farm. Those fears were indeed too true; it is a bargain would have ruined me, but for the lucky circumstance of my having an excise commission.

People may talk as they please, of the ignominy of the excise: £50 a year will support my wife and children and keep me independent of the world; and I would much rather have it said that my profession borrowed credit from me, than that I borrowed credit from my profession. Another advantage I have in this business, is the knowledge it gives me of the various shades of human character, consequently assisting me vastly in my poetic pursuits. I had the most ardent enthusiasm for the muses when nobody knew me, but myself, and that ardour is by no means cooled now that my lord Glencairn's goodness has introduced me to all the world. Not that I am in haste for the press. I have no idea of publishing, else I certainly had consulted my generous noble patron; but after acting the part of an honest

man, and supporting my family, my whole wishes and views are directed to poetic pursuits. I am aware, that though I were to give performances to the world, superior to my former works, still if they were of the same kind with those, the comparative reception they would meet with would mortify me. I have turned my thoughts on the drama. I do not mean the stately buskin of the tragic muse.

* * * * * *

Does not your ladyship think that an Edinburgh theatre would be more amused with affectation, folly and whim of true Scottish growth, than manners which by far the greatest part of the audience can only know at second hand?

I have the honour to be
Your ladyship's ever devoted
And grateful humble Servant.

No. 303.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

With a copy of 'Bruce's Address to his Troops at Bannock-burn.'

Dumfries, 12*th Jan.* 1794.

My Lord,

WILL your lordship allow me to present you with the inclosed little composition of mine, as a small tribute of gratitude for that acquaintance with which you have been pleased to honour me. Independent of my enthusiasm as a

Scotsman, I have rarely met with any thing in history, which interest my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannock-burn. On the one hand, a cruel, but able usurper, leading on the finest army in Europe to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly-daring, and greatly-injured people: on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her.

Liberty! thou art a prize truly, and indeed invaluable!—for never canst thou be too dearly bought!

I have the honour to be, &c.

No. 304.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

My Lord,

WHEN you cast your eye on the name at the bottom of this letter, and on the title page of the book I do myself the honour to send your lordship, a more pleasurable feeling than my vanity tells me, that it must be a name not entirely unknown to you. The generous patronage of your late illustrious brother found me in the lowest obscurity: he introduced my rustic muse to the partiality of my country; and to him I owe all. My sense of his goodness, and the anguish of my soul at losing my truly noble protector and friend, I have endeavoured to express in a

poem to his memory, which I have now published. This edition is just from the press; and in my gratitude to the dead and my respect for the living, (fame belies you, my lord, if you possess not the same dignity of man, which was your noble brother's characteristic feature) I had destined a copy for the earl of Glencairn. I learnt just now that you are in town:—allow me to present it you.

I know, my lord, such is the vile, venal contagion which pervades the world of letters, that professions of respect from an author, particularly from a poet to a lord, are more than suspicious. I claim my by-past conduct, and my feelings at this moment, as exceptions to the too just conclusion. Exalted as are the honours of your lordship's name, and unnoted as is the obscurity of mine, with the uprightness of an honest man I come before your lordship, with an offering, however humble, 'tis all I have to give, of my grateful respect; and to beg of you, my lord, 'tis all I have to ask of you, that you will do me the honour to accept of it.

I have the honour to be, &c

No. 305.

TO DR. ANDERSON.

SIR,

I AM much indebted to my worthy Dr. Blacklock, for introducing me to a

gentleman of Dr. Anderson's celebrity; but when you do me the honour to ask my assistance in your purposed publication, alas, Sir! you might as well think to cheapen a little honesty at the sign of an advocate's wig, or humility under the geneva band. I am a miserable hurried devil, worn to the marrow in the friction of holding the noses of the poor publicans to the grindstone of excise; and, like Milton's Satan, for private reasons, am forced

'To do what yet, tho' damn'd, I would abhor;'

—and except a couplet or two of honest execration * * * * * * *

No. 306.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Castle Douglas, 25th June, 1794.

HERE in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may.—Solitary confinement, you know, is Howard's favourite idea of reclaiming sinners; so let me consider by what fatality it happens, that I have so long been exceeding sinful as to neglect the correspondence of the most valued friend I have on earth. To tell you that I have been in poor health, will not be excuse enough, though it is true. I am afraid I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. My medical friends threaten me with a flying gout; but I trust they are mistaken.

I am just going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I paced along the road. The subject is LIBERTY: You know, my honoured friend, how dear the theme is to me. I design it an irregular ode for General Washington's birth-day. After having mentioned the degeneracy of other kingdoms, I come to Scotland thus:

'Thee, Caledonia, thy wild heaths among,' &c.
See Poems, p. 324.

You will probably have another scrawl from me in a stage or two.

No. 307.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU should have heard from me long ago; but over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed times I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils, so that *I have almost hung my harp on the willow trees.*

I am just now busy correcting a new edition of my poems; and this, with my ordinary business, finds me in full employment.*

* Burns's anxiety with regard to the correctness of his writings was very great. Being questioned as to his mode of composition, he replied, 'All my poetry is the effect of easy composition, but of *laborious correction.*'

I send you, by my friend Mr. Wallace, forty one songs for your fifth volume; if we cannot finish it any other way, what would you think of Scots words to some beautiful Irish airs? In the mean time, at your leisure, give a copy of the Museum to my worthy friend Mr. Peter Hill, bookseller, to bind for me, interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the laird of Glenriddel's, that I may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs.—A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever.

I have got an Highland dirk, for which I have great veneration; as it once was the dirk of *lord Balmerino*. It fell into bad hands, who stripped it of the silver mounting, as well as the knife and fork. I have some thoughts of sending it to your care, to get it mounted anew.

Thank you for the copies of my Volunteer Ballad.—Our friend Clarke has done *indeed* well! 'tis chaste and beautiful. I have not met with any thing that has pleased me so much. You know, I am no connoisseur; but that I am an amateur will be allowed me.

No. 308.

TO MISS FONTENELLE.

Accompanying a Prologue to be spoken for her Benefit.

MADAM,

IN such a bad world as ours, those who add to the scanty sum of our pleasures, are positively our benefactors. To you, Madam, on our humble Dumfries boards, I have been more indebted for entertainment than ever I was in prouder theatres. Your charms, as a woman, would insure applause to the most indifferent actress, and your theatrical talents would insure admiration to the plainest figure. This, Madam, is not the unmeaning, or insiduous compliment of the frivolous or interested; I pay it from the same honest impulse that the sublime of nature excites my admiration, or her beauties give me delight.

Will the foregoing lines be of any service to you on your approaching benefit night? If they will, I shall be prouder of my muse than ever. They are nearly extempore: I know they have no great merit; but though they should add but little to the entertainment of the evening, they give me the happiness of an opportunity to declare how much I have the honour to be, &c.

No. 309.

TO PETER MILLER, JUN. ESQ.

OF DALSWINTON.

Dumfries, Nov. 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR offer is indeed truly generous, and most sincerely do I thank you for it; but in my present situation, I find that I dare not accept it. You well know my political sentiments; and were I an insular individual, unconnected with a wife and a family of children, with the most fervid enthusiasm I would have volunteered my services: I then could and would have despised all consequences that might have ensued.

My prospect in the excise is something; at least, it is, encumbered as I am with the welfare, the very existence, of near half-a-score of helpless individuals, what I dare not sport with.

In the mean time, they are most welcome to my ode; only, let them insert it as a thing they have met with by accident and unknown to me. —Nay, if Mr. Perry, whose honour, after your character of him I cannot doubt; if he will give me an address and channel by which any thing will come safe from those spies with which he may be certain that his correspondence is beset, I will now and then send him any bagatelle that I may write. In the present hurry of Europe, nothing but news and politics will be regarded; but against

the days of peace, which heaven send soon, my little assistance may perhaps fill up an idle column of a Newspaper. I have long had it in my head to try my hand in the way of little prose essays, which I propose sending into the world through the medium of some newspaper; and should these be worth his while, to these Mr. Perry shall be welcome; and all my reward shall be, his treating me with his paper; which, by the bye, to any body who has the least relish for wit, is a high treat indeed.

With the most grateful esteem, I am ever,
Dear Sir, &c.

No. 310.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

Dumfries.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is indeed with the highest satisfaction that I congratulate you on the return of 'days of ease, and nights of pleasure,' after the horrid hours of misery, in which I saw you suffering existence when I was last in Ayrshire. I seldom pray for any body. 'I'm baith dead sweer, and wretched ill o't.' But most fervently do I beseech the great director of this world, that you may live long and be happy, but that you may live no longer than while you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverend care of your health. I know you will make it a point never, at one

time, to drink more than a pint of wine; (I mean an English pint,) and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time; and that cold drams you will never more taste. I am well convinced too, that after drinking, perhaps boiling punch, you will never mount your horse and gallop home in a chill, late hour.—Above all things, as I understand you are now in habits of intimacy with that *Boanerges* of gospel powers, *Father Auld*, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising the carnal moral works of *charity*, *humanity*, *generosity*, and *forgiveness*; things which you practised so flagrantly that it was evident you delighted in them; neglecting, or perhaps, profanely despising the *wholesome doctrine* of 'faith without works, the only anchor of salvation.'

A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion, be highly becoming from you at present: and in my zeal for your well-being, I earnestly press it on you to be diligent in chanting over the two inclosed pieces of sacred poesy. My best compliments to Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy.

Yours in the L——d,

R. B.

No. 311.

TO MR. SAMUEL CLARKE, JUN. DUMFRIES.

Sunday Morning.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS, I know, drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Captain ——— made use of to me, had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manners of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as, generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not ruin the peace and welfare of a wife and a family of chil-

at I am truly sorry that a man who stood so igh in my estimation as Mr. ——, should use me the manner in which I conceive he has done.*

No. 312.

TO MR. ALEXANDER FINDLATER.

SUPERVISOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

SIR,

INCLOSED are the two schemes. I ould not have troubled you with the collector's ie, but for suspicion lest it be not right. Mr. rskine promised me to make it right, if you will ive the goodness to shew him how. As I have copy of the scheme for myself, and the alter-

* The following foolish verses were sent as an attack on urns and his friends, for their political opinions. They were ritten by some member of a club, styling themselves the *yal Natives* of Dumfries. Being handed over the table to urns at a convivial meeting, he instantly indorsed the sub-ined reply.

The *Loyal Natives'* Verses.

Ye sons of sedition, give ear to my song,
Let Syme, Burns, and Maxwell, pervade every throng,
With, Craken the attorney, and Mundell the quack,
Send Willie the monger to hell with a smack.

Burns—extempore.

Ye true 'Loyal Natives,' attend to my song,
In uproar and riot rejoice the night long;
From *envy* and hatred your corps is exempt:
But where is your shield from the *darts of contempt*?

ations being very considerable from what it was formerly, I hope that I shall have access to this scheme I send you, when I come to face up my new books. *So much for schemes.*—And that no scheme to betray a FRIEND, or mislead a STRANGER; to seduce a YOUNG GIRL, or rob a HEN-ROOST: to subvert LIBERTY, or bribe an EXCISEMAN; to disturb the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, or annoy a GOSSIPPING; to overthrow the credit of ORTHODOXY, or the authority of OLD SONGS; to oppose *your wishes*, or frustrate *my hopes*—MAY PROSPER—is the sincere wish and prayer of

ROBERT BURNS.

No. 313.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE MORNING CHRONICLE.

Dumfries.

GENTLEMEN,

YOU will see by your subscribers' list, that I have now been about nine months one of that number.

I am sorry to inform you, that in that time, seven or eight of your papers either have never been sent me, or else have never reached me. To be deprived of any one number of the first newspaper in Great Britain for information, ability and independence, is what I can ill brook and bear; but to be deprived of that most admirable oration of the marquis of Lansdowne, when he made the

great, though ineffectual attempt, (in the language of the poet, I fear too true,) 'to save a SINKING STATE,'—this was a loss which I neither can, nor will forgive you.—That paper, Gentlemen, never reached me, but I demand it of you. I am a BRITON; and must be interested in the cause of LIBERTY:—I am a MAN; and the RIGHTS OF HUMAN NATURE cannot be indifferent to me. However, do not let me mislead you: I am not a man in that situation of life, which, as your subscriber, can be of any consequence to you, in the eyes of those to whom SITUATION OF LIFE ALONE is the criterion of MAN.—I am but a plain tradesman, in this distant, obscure country town: but that humble domicile in which I shelter my wife and children, is the CASTELLUM of a BRITON; and that scanty hard-earned income which supports them, is as truly my property, as the most magnificent fortune, of the most PUISSANT MEMBER of your HOUSE of NOBLES.

These, Gentlemen, are my sentiments; and to them I subscribe my name: and were I a man of ability and consequence enough to address the PUBLIC, with that name should they appear.

I am, &c.

No. 314.

TO COL. W. DUNBAR.

I AM not gone to Elysium, most noble Colonel, but am still here in this sublunary world,

ations being very considerable fi
formerly, I hope that I shall h
scheme I send you, when I co
new books. *So much for sch*
scheme to betray a FRIEND
GER; to seduce a YOUNG
ROOST: to subvert LIBE
MAN; to disturb the
annoy a GOSSIPPING
ORTHODOXY, or th
oppose *your wish*,
PROSPER—is the

315.

TO T' HERON, OF HERON

serving my God by propagating his image, and honouring my king by begetting him loyal subjects. Many happy returns of the season await my friend! May the thorns of care never beset his path! May peace be an inmate of his bosom, and rapture a frequent visitor of his soul! May the blood-hounds of misfortune never trace his steps, nor the screech-owl of sorrow alarm his dwelling! May enjoyment tell thy hours, and pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the bard! Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee!

No. 315.

TO MR. HERON, OF HERON.

To pillory on Parnassus the rank reprobation of character, the utter dereliction of all principle, in a profligate junto, which has not only outraged virtue, but violated common decency; which, spurning even hypocrisy as paltry iniquity below their daring;—to unmask their flagitiousness to the broadest day—to deliver such over to their merited fate, is surely not merely innocent, but laudable; is not only propriety, but virtue.—You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind on the heads of your opponents; and I swear by the lyre of Thalia to muster on your side all the votaries of honest laughter, and fair, candid ridicule!

I am extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests in a letter which Mr. Syme shewed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisors' list, and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed, *of course*. *Then*, a FRIEND might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about a hundred and twenty, to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor, in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand.

They also come forward by precedency on the list; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, or would not be indebted to a political friend. At the same time, Sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I shall petition your goodness with the same frankness as I now do myself the honour to subscribe myself, &c.

their calamity, and you will have the satisfaction of perusing at least one honest address. You are well acquainted with the dissection of human nature; nor do you need the assistance of a fellow-creature's bosom to inform you, that man is always a selfish, often a perfidious being.—This assertion; however the hasty conclusions of superficial observation may doubt of it, or the raw inexperience of youth may deny it, those who make the fatal experiment we have done, will feel.—You are a statesman, and consequently are not ignorant of the traffic of these corporation compliments.—The little great man who drives the borough to market, and the very great man who buys the borough in that market, they two do the whole business; and you well know, they, likewise, have their price. With that sullen disdain which you can so well assume, rise, illustrious Sir, and spurn these hireling efforts of venal stupidity. At best they are the compliments of a man's friends on the morning of his execution: They take a decent farewell, resign you to your fate, and hurry away from your approaching hour.

If fame say true, and omens be not very much mistaken, you are about to make your exit from that world where the sun of gladness gilds the paths of prosperous men: permit us, great Sir, with the sympathy of fellow-feeling, to hail your passage to the realms of ruin.

Whether the sentiment proceed from the selfishness or cowardice of mankind is immaterial; but to point out to a child of misfortune those who are still more unhappy, is to give him some degree of positive enjoyment. In this light, Sir,

our downfall may be again useful to you:—Though not exactly in the same way, it is not perhaps the first time it has gratified your feelings. It is true, the triumph of your evil star is exceedingly despiteful.—At an age when others are the votaries of pleasure, or underlings in business, you had attained the highest wish of a British statesman; and, with the ordinary date of human life, what a prospect was before you! Deeply rooted in *Royal Favour*, you overshadowed the land. The birds of passage, which follow ministerial sunshine through every clime of political faith and manners, flocked to your branches; and the beasts of the field, (the lordly possessors of hills and valleys) crowded under your shade. 'But behold a watcher, a holy one came down from heaven, and cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches!' A blow from an unthought-of quarter, one of those terrible accidents which peculiarly mark the hand of Omnipotence, overset your career, and laid all your fancied honours in the dust. But turn your eyes, Sir, to the tragic scenes of our fate.—An ancient nation that, for many ages, had gallantly maintained the unequal struggle for independence with her much more powerful neighbour, at last agrees to a union which should ever after make them one people. In consideration of certain circumstances, it was covenanted that the former should enjoy a stipulated alleviation in her share of the public burdens, particularly in that branch of the revenue called

the excise. This just privilege has of late given great umbrage to some interested, powerful individuals, of the more potent part of the empire, and they have spared no wicked pains, under insidious pretexts, to subvert what they dared not openly to attack, from the dread which they yet entertained of the spirit of their ancient enemies.

In this conspiracy we fell; nor did we alone suffer, our country was deeply wounded. A number of (we will say) respectable individuals, largely engaged in trade, where we were not only useful, but absolutely necessary to our country, in her dearest interests; we, with all that was near and dear to us, were sacrificed without remorse, to the infernal deity of political expediency! We fell to gratify the wishes of dark envy, and the views of unprincipled ambition! Your foes, Sir, were avowed; were too brave to take an ungenerous advantage: *you* fell in the face of day.—On the contrary, our enemies, to complete our overthrow, contrived to make their guilt appear the villainy of a nation.—Your downfal only drags with you your private friends and partisans: In our misery are more or less involved the most numerous, and most valuable part of the community —all those who immediately depend on the cultivation of the soil, from the landlord of a province, down to his lowest hind.

Allow us, Sir, yet farther, just to hint at another rich vein of comfort in the dreary regions of adversity;—the gratulations of an approving conscience. In a certain great assembly, of which you are a distinguished member, panegyrics on your private virtues have so often wounded your

Some years ago your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary burgess.—Will you allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on the footing of a real freeman of the town, in the schools?

* * * * * *

If you are so very kind as to grant my request,* it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where I can officially serve you; and will if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your devoted humble Servant.

No. 318.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON EDINBURGH.

Dumfries, July 4th, 1796.

HOW are you, my dear friend, and how comes on your fifth volume? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but, alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy on me! Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia.

* * * * * *

* This request was immediately complied with.

You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world—because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment! However, *hope* is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can.

Let me hear from you as soon as convenient.—Your work is a great one; and now that it is near finished, I see, if we were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended; yet I will venture to prophecy, that to future ages your publication will be the text book and standard of Scottish song and music.

I am ashamed to ask another favour of you because you have been so very good already; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers, a young lady who sings well, to whom she wishes to present the *Scots Musical Museum*. If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first *Fly*, as I am anxious to have it soon.

Yours ever,

ROBERT BURNS.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following letters, with the exception of one only, were written by Robert Burns before his marriage. They are printed *verbatim* from the originals, and where any of them are torn, which unfortunately is the case with two or three, the deficiencies are marked by *asterisks*.

The lady to whom they are addressed seems to have encouraged a friendly correspondence with the poet, whose fascinating powers of mind must necessarily have produced, on her part, esteem and admiration.

Yet, although he was forbidden to indulge in the more tender affections of the heart, it was natural to expect, from the strong sensibility and delicate feelings of the bard, that, in his correspondence with a young and amiable woman, love must be a principal theme.

We are happy, that, from the condescension of the proprietor, we are enabled to favour the public with an additional portion of the writings of our favourite poet: nor is this condescension the effect of vanity, as from the letters themselves this lady can never be discovered; although, like Swift's Vanessa, she is, under a fictious name, ushered into immortality, by an author equally celebrated.

As these letters, on perusal, will be found to possess every mark of the strong and vigorous mind of Burns, they will, in no degree, diminish that celebrity he has so justly merited by his epistolary compositions. To remove the doubts of any person who might suspect that they were not the genuine productions of the bard to whom they are ascribed, the originals were permitted to remain with the publisher for one month after their first publication. Their authenticity, however, is now so well established, that no further reference to the originals is necessary.

LETTERS TO CLARINDA.

No. 1.

I CAN say, with truth, Madam, that I never met with a person in my life whom I more anxiously wished to meet again than yourself. To-night I was to have had that very great pleasure, I was intoxicated with the idea, but an unlucky fall from a coach has so bruised one of my knees, that I can't stir my leg; so if I don't see you again, I shall not rest in my grave for chagrin. I was vexed to the soul I had not seen you sooner; I am determined to cultivate your friendship with the enthusiasm of religion; but thus has fortune ever served me. I cannot bear the idea of leaving Edinburgh without seeing you. I know not how to account for it—I am strangely taken with some people; nor am I often mistaken. You are a stranger to me; but I am an odd being: some yet unnamed feelings, things not principles, but better than whims, carry me farther than boasted reason ever did a philosopher.

Farewell! every happiness be yours!

Saturday Evening. • • •

No. 2.

MADAM,

I HAD set no small store by my tea-drinking to-night, and have not often been so disappointed. Saturday evening I shall embrace the opportunity with the greatest pleasure. I leave this town this day se'nnight, and, probably, for a couple of twelvemonths; but must ever regret that I so lately got an acquaintance I shall ever highly esteem, and in whose welfare I shall ever be warmly interested.

Our worthy common friend, in her usual pleasant way, rallied me a good deal on my new acquaintance, and in the humour of her ideas I wrote some lines, which I inclose you, as I think they have a good deal of poetic merit; and Miss —— tells me, you are not only a critic, but a poetess. Fiction, you know, is the native region of poetry; and I hope you will pardon my vanity in sending you the bagatelle as a tolerable off-hand *jeu-d'esprit*. I have several poetic trifles which I shall gladly leave with Miss ——, or you, if they were worth house room; as there are scarcely two people on earth by whom it would mortify me more to be forgotten, though at the distance of ninescore miles.

I am, Madam,
With the highest respect,
Your very humble Servant.

Thursday Evening. • • •

No. 3.

I BEG your pardon, my dear 'Clarinda,' for the fragment scrawl I sent you yesterday. I really do not know what I wrote. A gentleman, for whose character, abilities, and critical knowledge, I have the highest veneration, called in just as I had begun the second sentence, and I would not make the porter wait. I read to my much-respected friend several of my own bagatelles, and, among others, your lines, which I had copied out. He began some criticisms on them as on the other pieces, when I informed him they were the work of a young lady in this town; which, I assure you, made him stare. My hon-

prepossession for a fine woman, but he must run his head against an intrigue? Take a little of the tender witchcraft of love, and add it to the generous, the honourable sentiments of manly friendship; and I know but *one* more delightful morsel, which few, few in any rank, ever taste. Such a composition is like adding cream to strawberries; it not only gives the fruit a more elegant richness, but has a peculiar deliciousness of its own.

I inclose you a few lines I composed on a late melancholy occasion. I will not give above five or six copies of it at all, and I would be hurt if any friend should give any copies without my consent.

You cannot imagine, Clarinda, (I like the idea of Arcadian names in a commerce of this kind) how much store I have set by the hopes of your future friendship. I do not know if you have a just idea of my character, but I wish you to see me *as I am.* I am, as most people of my trade are, a strange *will o' wisp* being; the victim, too frequently, of much imprudence and many follies. My great constituent elements are pride and passion: the first I have endeavoured to humanize into integrity and honour; the last makes me a devotee to the warmest degree of enthusiasm, in love, religion, or friendship; either of them, or all together, as I happen to be inspired. 'Tis true, I never saw you but once; but how much acquaintance did I form with you in that once! Do not think I flatter you, or have a design upon you, Clarinda; I have too much pride for the one, and too little cold contrivance for the other; but of all God's creatures I ever could approach in the

beaten way of acquaintance, you struck me with the deepest, the strongest, the most permanent impression. I say the most permanent, because I know myself well, and how far I can promise either on my prepossessions or powers. Why are you unhappy? And why are so many of our fellow-creatures, unworthy to belong to the same species with you, blest with all they can wish? You have a hand all benevolent to give; why were you denied the pleasure? You have a heart formed, gloriously formed, for all the most refined luxuries of love; why was that heart ever wrung? O Clarinda! shall we not meet in a state, some yet unknown state of being, where the lavish hand of plenty shall minister to the highest wish of benevolence; and where the chill north wind of prudence shall never blow over the flowery fields of enjoyment? If we do not, man was made

course have I not lost! Perhaps, though, 'twas better for my peace. You see I am either above, or incapable of dissimulation. I believe it is want of that particular genius. I despise design, because I want either coolness or wisdom to be capable of it. I am interrupted.

Adieu! My dear Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

Friday Evening.

No. 4.

Monday Evening, 11 *o'clock.*

WHY have I not heard from you, Clarinda? To-day I well expected it; and before supper, when a letter to me was announced, my heart danced with rapture: but behold, 'twas some fool, who had taken it into his head to turn poet, and made me an offering of the first fruits of his nonsense. 'It is not poetry, but prose run mad.' Did I ever repeat to you an epigram I made on a Mr. Elphinstone, who has given a translation of Martial, a famous Latin poet? The poetry of Elphinstone can only equal his prose notes. I was sitting in a merchant's shop of my acquaintance, waiting somebody: he put Elphinstone into my hand, and asked my opinion of it; I begged leave to write it in a blank leaf, which I did, as you shall see on a new page.

To Mr. Elphinstone.

O thou, whom poesy abhors!
Whom prose has turned out of doors!
Heardst thou yon groan? proceed no further!
'Twas laurel'd Martial calling murther!

I am determined to see you, if at all possible, on Saturday evening. Next week, I must sing—

'The night is my departing night,
The morn 's the day I maun awa'
There 's neither friend nor foe o' mine
But wishes that I were awa!
What I hae done for lack o' wit,
I never, never can reca';
I hope ye're a' my friends as yet,
Gude night, and joy be wi' you a'!'

If I could see you sooner, I would be so much the happier; but I would not purchase the

I like to have quotations for every occasion. They give one's ideas so pat, and save one the trouble of finding expression adequate to one's feelings. I think it is one of the greatest pleasures attending a poetic genius, that we can give our woes, cares, joys, loves, &c. an embodied form in verse, which, to me, is ever immediate ease. Goldsmith says finely of his muse—

'Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe;
Who found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so.'

My limb has been so well to-day, that I have gone up and down stairs often without my staff. To-morrow, I hope to walk once again on my own legs to dinner. It is only next street, Adieu!

SYLVANDER.

No. 5.

Sunday Night.

THE impertinence of fools has joined with a return of an old disposition, to make me good for nothing to-day. The paper has lain before me all this evening, to write to my dear Clarinda, but——

'Fools rush'd on fools, as waves succeed to waves.'

I cursed them in my soul: they sacrilegiously disturbed my meditations on her who holds my heart. What a creature is man! A little alarm last night and to-day, that I am mortal, has made such a revolution on my spirits! There is no

philosophy, no divinity, comes half so home to the mind. I have no idea of courage that braves heaven. 'Tis the wild ravings of an imaginary hero in bedlam.

I can no more, Clarinda; I can scarce hold up my head; but I am happy you do not know it, you would be so uneasy.

SYLVANDER.

Monday Morning.

I am, my lovely friend, much better this morning, on the whole; but I have a horrid langour on my spirits.

'Sick of the world, and all its joy,
My soul in pining sadness mourns;
Dark scenes of woe my mind employ,
The past and present in their turns.'

too much neglected, to secure it shall, all the future days and nights of my life, be my steady care! The idea of my Clarinda follows—

'Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mix'd with God's, her lov'd idea lies.'

But I fear that inconstancy, the consequent imperfection of human weakness. Shall I meet with a friendship that defies years of absence, and the chances and changes of fortune? Perhaps 'such things are;' *one* honest man I have great hopes from that way: but who, except a romance writer, would think on a *love* that could promise for life, in spite of distance, absence, chance, and change; and that too, with slender hopes of fruition? For my own part, I can say to myself in both requisitions, 'Thou art the man!' I dare, in cool resolve I dare, declare myself that friend, and that lover. If womankind is capable of such things, Clarinda is. I trust that she is; and feel I shall be miserable, if she is not. There is not one virtue which gives worth, or one sentiment which does honour to the sex, that she does not possess superior to any woman I ever saw: her exalted mind, aided a little perhaps by her situation, is, I think, capable of that nobly-romantic love-enthusiasm.

May I see you on Wednesday evening, my dear angel? The next Wednesday again will, I conjecture, be a hated day to us both. I tremble for censorious remark, for your sake; but in extraordinary cases, may not usual and useful precaution be a little dispensed with? Three evenings, three swift-winged evenings, with pinions of

down, are all the past; I dare not calculate the future. I shall call at Miss ——'s to-morrow evening: 'twill be a farewell call.

I have wrote out my last sheet of paper, so I am reduced to my last half-sheet. What a strange, mysterious faculty, is that thing called imagination! We have no ideas almost at all of another world; but I have often amused myself with visionary schemes of what happiness might be enjoyed by small alterations—alterations that we can fully enter to, in this present state of existence. For instance, suppose you and I just as we are at present; the same reasoning powers, sentiments, and even desires; the same fond curiosity for knowledge and remarking observation in our minds; and imagine our bodies free from pain, and the necessary supplies for the wants of nature at all times, and easily within our reach

mark the passing pomp of a travelling monarch; or in a shady bower of Mercury or Venus, dedicating the hour to love, in mutual converse, relying honour, and revelling endearment, whilst the most exalted strains of poesy and harmony would be the ready, spontaneous language of our souls? Devotion is the favourite employment of your heart; so it is of mine: what incentives then to, and powers for reverence, gratitude, faith and hope, in all the fervours of adoration and praise to that Being, whose unsearchable wisdom, power, and goodness, so pervaded, so inspired every sense and feeling!——By this time, I dare say, you will be blessing the neglect of the maid that leaves me destitute of paper!

SYLVANDER.

No. 6.

I CANNOT go out to-day, my dearest Clarinda, without sending you half a line, by way of a sin-offering; but believe me, 'twas the sin of ignorance. Could you think that I *intended* to hurt you by any thing I said yesternight? Nature has been too kind to you for your happiness, your delicacy, your sensibility.—O why should such glorious qualifications be the fruitful source of woe! You have 'murdered sleep' to me last night. I went to bed, impressed with an idea that you were unhappy; and every start I closed my eyes, but fancy painted you in such scenes of

romantic misery, that I would almost be persuaded you were not well this morning.

——'If I unweeting have offended,
Impute it not.'
——'But while we live,
But one short hour perhaps, between us two
Let there be peace.'

If Mary be not gone by this reaches you, give her my best compliments. She is a charming girl, and highly worthy of the noblest love.

I send you a poem to read, till I call on you this night, which will be about nine. I wish I could procure some potent spell, some fairy charm, that would protect from injury, or restore to rest, that bosom-chord, 'trembling alive all o'er,' on which hangs your peace of mind. I thought, vainly, I fear, thought that the devotion of love—

peace and happiness are to me dearer than my soul—name the terms on which you wish to see me, to correspond with me, and you have them —I must love, pine, mourn, and adore in secret —this you *must* not deny me—you will ever be to me—

> 'Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,
> Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart!'

I have not patience to read the puritanic scrawl. —Vile sophistry!—Ye heavens! thou God of nature! thou redeemer of mankind! ye look down with approving eyes on a passion inspired by the purest flame, and guarded by truth, delicacy, and honour: but the half-inch soul of an unfeeling, cold-blooded, pitiful presbyterian bigot, cannot forgive any thing above his dungeon bosom and foggy head.

Farewell; I'll be with you to-morrow evening —and be at rest in your mind—I will be yours in the way you think most to your happiness! I dare not proceed——I love, and will love you, and will with joyous confidence approach the throne of the almighty judge of men, with your dear idea, and will despise the scum of sentiment, and the mist of sophistry.

SYLVANDER.

No. 8.

YOU are right, my dear Clarinda: a friendly correspondence goes for nothing, except

one write their undisguised sentiments. Yours please me for their intrinsic merit, as well as because they are *yours*, which, I assure you, is to me a high recommendation. Your religious sentiments, Madam, I revere. If you have, on some suspicious evidence, from some lying oracle, learnt that I despise or ridicule so sacredly important a matter, as real religion, you have, my Clarinda, much misconstrued your friend.—'I am not mad, most noble Festus!' Have you ever met a perfect character? Do we not sometimes rather exchange faults than get rid of them? For instance, I am perhaps tired with, and shocked at a life too much the prey of giddy inconsistencies and thoughtless follies; by degrees I grow sober, prudent, and statedly pious—I say statedly, because the most unaffected devotion is not at all inconsistent with my first character—I join the world in congratulating myself on the happy change. But let me pry more narrowly into this affair. Have I, at bottom, any thing of a secret pride in these endowments and emendations? have I nothing of a presbyterian sourness, an hypocritical severity, when I survey my less regular neighbours? in a word, have I missed all those nameless and numberless modifications of indistinct selfishness, which are so near our own eyes, that we can scarce bring them within the sphere of our vision, and which the known spotless cambric of our character hides from the ordinary observer?

My definition of worth is short; truth and humanity respecting our fellow-creatures; reverence and humility in the presence of that Being, my Creator and Preserver, and who, I have every

reason to believe, will one day be my Judge. The first part of my definition is the creature of unbiassed instinct; the last is the child of after reflection. Where I found these two essentials, I would gently note, and slightly mention, any attendant flaws—flaws, the marks, the consequences of human nature.

I can easily enter into the sublime pleasures that your strong imagination and keen sensibility must derive from religion, particularly if a little in the shade of misfortune; but I own I cannot, without a marked grudge, see heaven totally engross so amiable, so charming a woman, as my friend Clarinda; and should be very well pleased at *a circumstance* that would put it in the power of somebody (happy somebody!) to divide her attention, with all the delicacy and tenderness of an earthly attachment.

You will not easily persuade me that you have not a grammatical knowledge of the English language.—So far from being inaccurate, you are elegant beyond any woman of my acquaintance, except one, whom I wish you knew.

Your last verses to me have so delighted me, that I have got an excellent old Scots air that suits the measure, and you shall see them in print in the 'Scots Musical Museum,' a work publishing by a friend of mine in this town. I want four stanzas; you gave me but three, and one of them alluded to an expression in my former letter; so I have taken your two first verses, with a slight alteration in the second, and have added a third; but you must help me to a fourth. Here they are: the latter half of the first stanza would

have been worthy of Sappho; I am in raptures with it.

Talk not of love, it gives me pain,
For love has been my foe:
He bound me with an iron chain,
And sunk me deep in woe.

But friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was form'd to prove:
There, welcome, win and wear the prize,
But never talk of love.

Your friendship much can make me blest,
O, why that bliss destroy!
[only]
Why urge the odious one request,
[will]
You know I must deny.

The alteration in the second stanza is no improvement, but there was a slight inaccuracy in your rhyme. The third I offer only to your choice, and have left two *words* for your determination. The air is 'The banks of Spey,' and is most beautiful.

To-morrow evening I intend taking a chair, and paying a visit at Park-place to a much valued old friend. If I could be sure of finding you at home, (and I will send one of the chairmen to call) I would spend from five to six o'clock with you, as I go past. I cannot do more at this time, as I have something on my hand that hurries me much. I propose giving you the first call, my old friend the second, and Miss ——, as I return home. Do not break any engagement for me, as I will spend another evening with you at any rate before I leave town.

Do not tell me that you are pleased when your friends inform you of your faults. I am ignorant what they are; but I am sure they must be such evanescent trifles, compared with your personal and mental accomplishments, that I would despise the ungenerous, narrow soul, who would notice any shadow of imperfections you may seem to have, any other way than in the most delicate, agreeable raillery. Coarse minds are not aware how much they injure the keenly feeling tie of bosom-friendship, when in their foolish officiousness they mention what nobody cares for recollecting. People of nice sensibility, and generous minds, have a certain intrinsic dignity, that fires at being trifled with, or lowered, or even too nearly approached.

You need make no apology for long letters: I am even with you. Many happy new years to you, charming Clarinda! I can't dissemble, were it to shun perdition. He who sees you as I have done, and does not love you, deserves to be damn'd for his stupidity! He who loves you, and would injure you, deserves to be doubly damn'd for his villany! Adieu!

SYLVANDER.

P. S. What would you think of this for a fourth stanza?

Your thought, if love must harbour there,
  Concealed it in that thought,
Nor cause me from my bosom tear
  The very friend I sought.

No. 9.

SOME days, some nights, nay, some *hours*, like the 'ten righteous persons in Sodom,' save the rest of the vapid, tiresome, miserable months and years of life. One of these *hours*, my dear Clarinda blest me with yesternight.

——'One well spent hour,
In such a tender circumstance for friends,
Is better than an age of common time!'
Thomson.

My favourite feature in Milton's Satan is his manly fortitude in supporting what cannot be re-

My little fellow is all my name-sake.—Write me soon. My every, strongest good wishes attend you, Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

Saturday Noon.

I know not what I have written—I am pestered with people around me.

No. 10.

Sunday Morning.

I HAVE just been before the throne of my God, Clarinda; according to my association of ideas, my sentiments of love and friendship, I next devote myself to you. Yesternight I was happy—happiness 'that the world cannot give.'—I kindle at the recollection; but it is a flame where innocence looks smiling on, and honour stands by, a sacred guard.—Your heart, your fondest wishes, your dearest thoughts, these are yours to bestow: your person is unapproachable, by the laws of your country; and he loves not as I do, who would make you miserable.

You are an angel, Clarinda; you are surely no mortal that 'the earth owns.'—To kiss your hand, to live on your smile, is to me far more exquisite bliss, than the dearest favours that the fairest of the sex, yourself excepted, can bestow.

Sunday Evening.

You are the constant companion of my thoughts. How wretched is the condition of one who is

haunted with conscious guilt, and trembling under the idea of dreaded vengeance! and what a placid calm, what a charming secret enjoyment it gives, to bosom the kind feelings of friendship, and the fond throes of love! Out upon the tempest of anger, the acrimonious gall of fretful impatience, the sullen frost of lowering resentment, or the corroding poison of withered envy! They eat up the immortal part of man! If they spent their fury only on the unfortunate objects of them, it would be something in their favour; but these miserable passions, like traitor Iscariot, betray their lord and master.

Thou almighty author of peace, and goodness, and love! Do thou give me the social heart that kindly tastes of every man's cup! It is a draught of joy—warm and open my heart to share it with cordial, unenvying rejoicing! Is it the bitter potion of sorrow—melt my heart with sincerely sympathetic woe! Above all, do thou give me the manly mind, that resolutely exemplifies, in life and manners, those sentiments which I would wish to be thought to possess! The friend of my soul—there may I never deviate from the firmest fidelity, and most active kindness! Clarinda, the dear object of my fondest love; there, may the most sacred, inviolate honour, the most faithful, kindling constancy, ever watch and animate my every thought and imagination!

Did you ever meet with the following lines spoken of religion, your darling topic.

> *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
> *is* that gilds the horror of our night!

When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few,
When friends are faithless, and when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction, or repels its dart:
Within the breast bids purest rapture rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.'

I met with these verses very early in life, and was so delighted with them, that I have them by me, copied at school.

Good night, and sound rest, my dearest Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

No. 11.

I AM delighted, charming Clarinda, with your honest enthusiasm for religion. Those of either sex, but particularly the female, who are lukewarm in that most important of all things, 'O my soul, come not thou into their secrets!'—I feel myself deeply interested in your good opinion, and will lay before you the outlines of my belief. He, who is our author and preserver, and will one day be our judge, must be (not for his sake in the way of duty, but from the naked impulse of our hearts) the object of our reverential awe and grateful adoration: He is almighty and all-bounteous, we are weak and dependent; hence, prayer and every other sort of devotion.——'He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life;' consequently, it must be in every one's power to embrace his offer

of 'everlasting life;' otherwise he could not, in justice, condemn those who did not. A mind pervaded, actuated, and governed by purity, truth, and charity, though it does not *merit* heaven, yet is an absolutely necessary pre-requisite, without which heaven can neither be obtained nor enjoyed; and, by divine promise, such a mind shall never fail of attaining 'everlasting life:' hence, the impure, the deceiving, and the uncharitable, extrude themselves from eternal bliss, by their unfitness for enjoying it. The Supreme Being has put the immediate administration of all this, for wise and good ends known to himself, into the hands of Jesus Christ, a great personage, whose relation to him we cannot comprehend, but whose relation to us is a guide and Saviour; and who, except for our own obstinacy and misconduct, will bring us all, through various ways, and by various means, to bliss at last.

These are my tenets, my lovely friend; and which, I think, cannot be well disputed. My creed is pretty nearly expressed in the last clause of Jamie Dean's grace, an honest weaver in Ayrshire; 'Lord, grant that we may lead a gude life! for a gude life maks a gude end, at least it helps weel!'

I am flattered by the entertainment you tell me you have found in my packet. You see me as I have been, you know me as I am, and may guess at what I am likely to be. I too may say, 'Talk not of love, &c.' for indeed he has 'plunged me deep in woe!' Not that I ever saw a woman who pleased unexceptionably, as my Clarinda ıntly says, 'In the companion, the friend,

and the mistress.' *One* indeed I could except—*One*, before passion threw its mists over my discernment I knew it, *the* first of women! Her name is indelibly written in my heart's core—but I dare not look in on it—a degree of agony would be the consequence. Oh! thou perfidious, cruel, mischief-making demon, who presidest o'er that frantic passion—thou mayest, thou dost poison my peace, but shalt not taint my honour—I would not for a single moment give an asylum to the most distant imagination, that would shadow the faintest outline of a selfish gratification, at the expence of *her* whose happiness is twisted with the threads of my existence.——May she be happy as she deserves! And if my tenderest, faithful friendship can add to her bliss—I shall at least have one solid mine of enjoyment in my bosom! *Don't guess at these ravings!*

I watched at our front window to-day, but was disappointed. It has been a day of disappointments. I am just risen from a two hours' bout after supper, with silly or sordid souls, who could relish nothing in common with me—but the Port. 'One.'——'Tis now 'witching time of night;' and whatever is out of joint in the foregoing scrawl, impute it to enchantments and spells; for I can't look over it, but will seal it up directly, as I don't care for to-morrow's criticisms on it.

You are by this time fast asleep, Clarinda; may good angels attend and guard you as constantly and faithfully as my good wishes do.

'Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar graces.'

John Milton, I wish thy soul better rest than I expect on my pillow to-night! O for a little of the cart-horse part of human nature! Good night, my dearest Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

Tuesday Night.

No. 12.

Thursday Morning.

'Unlavish Wisdom never works in vain.'

I HAVE been tasking my reason, Clarinda, why a woman, who, for native genius, poignant wit, strength of mind, generous sincerity of soul, and the sweetest female tenderness, is without a peer; and whose personal charms have few, very, very few parallels, among her sex; why, or how she should fall to the blessed lot of a poor hairum-scairum poet, whom Fortune had kept for her particular use, to wreak her temper on, whenever she was in ill-humour. One time I conjectured, that as Fortune is the most capricious jade ever known; she may have taken, not a fit of remorse, but a paroxysm of whim, to raise the poor devil out of the mire, where he had so often and so conveniently served her as a stepping-stone, and given him the most glorious boon she ever had in her gift, merely for the maggot's sake, to see how his fool head and his fool heart will bear it. At other times I was vain enough

to think that Nature, who has a great deal to say with Fortune, had given the coquettish goddess some such hint as, 'Here is a paragon of female excellence, whose equal, in all my former compositions, I never was lucky enough to hit on, and despair of ever doing so again; you have cast her rather in the shades of life; there is a certain poet, of my making; among your frolics, it would not be amiss to attach him to this master-piece of my hand, to give her that immortality among mankind which no woman, of any age, ever more deserved, and which few rhymsters of this age are better able to confer.'

Evening, 9 o'clock.

I am here, absolutely unfit to finish my letter, pretty hearty after a bowl, which has been constantly plied since dinner, till this moment. I have been with Mr. Schetki, the musician, and he has set it* finely.——I have no distinct ideas of any thing, but that I have drunk your health twice to-night, and that you are all my soul holds dear in this world.

SYLVANDER.

No. 19.

I WAS on the way, *my love*, to meet you (I never do things by halves) when I got your card. M——— goes out of town to-morrow

* 'Clarinda, mistress of my soul,' &c.—*See Poems, p.* 458.

morning, to see a brother of his who is newly arrived from ———. I am determined that he and I shall call on you together; so, look you, lest I should never see to-morrow, we will call on you to-night; ——— and you may put off tea till about seven; at which time, in the Galloway phrase, 'an' the beast be to the fore, an' the branks bide hale,' expect the humblest of your humble servants, and his dearest friend. We propose staying only half an hour, 'for ought we ken.' I could suffer the lash of misery eleven months in the year, were the twelfth to be composed of hours like yesternight. You are the soul of my enjoyment: all else is of the stuff of stocks and stones.

SYLVANDER.

No. 14.

I AM certain I saw you, Clarinda; but you don't look to the proper story for a poet's lodging—

'Where speculation roosted near the sky.'

I could almost have thrown myself over, for very vexation. Why did'nt you look higher? It has spoilt my peace for this day. To be so near my charming Clarinda; to miss her look when it was searching for me, I am sure the soul is capable of disease, for mine has convulsed itself into an inflammatory fever.

You have converted me, Clarinda. (I shall love that name while I live; there is heavenly music in it). Booth and Amelia I know well. Your sentiments on that subject, as they are on every subject, are just and noble. 'To be feelingly alive to kindness, and to unkindness,' is a charming female character.

What I said in my last letter, the powers of fuddling sociality only know for me. By yours, I understand my good star has been partly in my horizon, when I got wild in my reveries. Had that evil planet, which has almost all my life shed its baleful rays on my devoted head, been, as usual, in my zenith, I had certainly blabb'd something that would have pointed out to you the dear object of my tenderest friendship, and, in spite of me, something more. Had that fatal information escaped me, and it was merely chance, or kind stars, that it did not, I had been undone! You never would have written me, except perhaps *once* more! O, I could curse circumstances, and the coarse tie of human laws, which keeps fast what common sense would loose, and which bars that happiness itself cannot give—happiness which otherwise Love and Honour would warrant! But hold, I shall make no more 'hair-breadth 'scapes.'

My friendship, Clarinda, is a life-rent business. My likings are both strong and eternal. I told you I had but one male friend: I have but two female. I should have a third, but she is surrounded by the blandishments of flattery and courtship. *** I register in my heart's core—******. Miss N———can tell you how divine she is. She is worthy of a place in the same bo-

som with my Clarinda. That is the highest compliment I can pay her.

Farewell, Clarinda! Remember

SYLVANDER.

Thursday Noon.

No. 15.

Tuesday Evening.

THAT you have faults, my Clarinda, I never doubted; but I knew not where they existed, and Saturday night made me more in the dark than ever. O, Clarinda, why will you wound my soul by hinting, that last night must have lessened my opinion of you! True; I was 'behind the scenes with you;' but what did I see? A bosom glowing with honour and benevolence; a mind ennobled by genius, informed and refined by education and reflection; and exalted by native religion, genuine as in the climes of heaven; a heart formed for all the glorious meltings of friendship, love, and pity. These I saw.—I saw the noblest immortal soul creation ever shewed me.

I looked long, my dear Clarinda, for your letter; and am vexed that you are complaining. I have not caught you so far wrong as in your idea, that the commerce you have with *one* friend hurts you, if you cannot tell every tittle of it to *another*. Why have so injurious an opinion of a good God, Clarinda, as to think, that Friendship and Love, on the sacred, inviolate principles of Truth, Honour,

and Religion, can be any thing else than an object of his divine approbation?

I have mentioned, in some of my former scrawls, Saturday evening next. Do allow me to wait on you that evening. Oh, my angel! how soon must we part! and when can we meet again! I look forward on the horrid interval with tearful eyes! What have I lost by not knowing you sooner. I fear, I fear my acquaintance with you is too short, to make that *lasting* impression on your heart I could wish.

SYLVANDER.

No. 16.

Saturday Morning.

YOUR thoughts on religion, Clarinda, shall be welcome. You may perhaps distrust me when I say 'tis also *my* favourite topic; but mine is the religion of the bosom. I hate the very idea of a controversial divinity; as I firmly believe, that every honest, upright man, of whatever sect, will be accepted of the Deity. If your verses, as you seem to hint, contain censure, except you want an occasion to break with me, don't send them. I have a little infirmity in my disposition, that where I fondly love or highly esteem, I cannot bear reproach.

'Reverence thyself,' is a sacred maxim, and I wish to cherish it. I think I told you lord Bolingbroke's saying to Swift—'Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely; make an

effort to love me with all mine.' A glorious sentiment, and without which there can be no friendship! I do highly, very highly esteem you, indeed, Clarinda; you merit it all! Perhaps too, I scorn dissimulation! I could fondly love you: judge then what a maddening sting your reproach would be. 'O! I have sins to *heaven*, but none to *you*!'—With what pleasure would I meet you to-day, but I cannot walk to meet the fly. I hope to be able to see you, on *foot*, about the middle of next week.

I am interrupted—perhaps you are not sorry for it, you will tell me—but I won't anticipate blame. O Clarinda! did you know how dear to me is your look of kindness, your smile of approbation! you would not, either in prose or verse, risk a censorious remark.

'Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe!'

SYLVANDER.

No. 17.

Saturday Morning.

THERE is no time, my Clarinda, when the conscious thrilling chords of Love and Friendship give such delight, as in the pensive hours of what our favourite Thomson calls, 'Philosophic Melancholy.' The sportive insects, who bask in the sunshine of prosperity; or the worms that luxuriant crawl amid their ample wealth of earth,

they need no Clarinda; they would despise Sylvander—if they durst. The family of Misfortune, a numerous group of brothers and sisters! they need a resting place to their souls: unnoticed, often condemned by the world; in some degree, perhaps, condemned by themselves, they feel the full enjoyment of ardent love, delicate tender endearments, mutual esteem, and mutual reliance.

In this light I have often admired religion. In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a compassionate Deity, an Almighty Protector, are doubly dear.

> 'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning light;
> 'Tis *this* that gilds the horrors of our night.'

I have been this morning taking a peep through, as Young finely says, 'the dark postern of time long elaps'd;' and, you will easily guess, 'twas a rueful prospect. What a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly! My life reminded me of a ruined temple; what strength, what proportion in some parts! what unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others! I kneeled down before the Father of mercies and said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!' I rose, eased and strengthened. I despise the superstition of a fanatic, but I love the religion of a man. 'The future,' said I to myself, 'is still before me:' there let me

> ——'On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man!'

'I have difficulties many to encounter,' said I; 'but they are not absolutely insuperable: and

where is firmness of mind shown but in exertion? mere declamation is bombast rant.'—'Besides, wherever I am, or in whatever situation I may be—

'———'Tis nought to me:
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the wild waste as in the city full;
And where he vital breathes, there must be joy!'

Saturday Night—half after Ten.

What luxury of bliss I was enjoying this time yesternight! My ever-dearest Clarinda, you have stolen away my soul: but you have refined, you have exalted it: you have given it a stronger sense of virtue, and a stronger relish for piety.—Clarinda, first of your sex, if ever I am the veriest wretch on earth to forget you; if ever your lovely image is effaced from my soul,

'May I be lost, no eye to weep my end;
And find no earth that's base enough to bury me!'

What trifling silliness is the childish fondness of the every-day children of the world! 'tis the unmeaning toying of the younglings of the fields and forests: but where Sentiment and Fancy unite their sweets; where Taste and Delicacy refine; where Wit adds the flavour, and Good-sense gives strength and spirit to all, what a delicious draught is the hour of tender endearment!—Beauty and Grace, in the arms of Truth and Honour, in all the luxury of mutual love!

Clarinda, have you ever seen the picture realized? Not in all its very richest colouring.

Last night, Clarinda, but for one slight shade, was the glorious picture—

> ——————————Innocence
> Look'd gaily smiling on; while rosy Pleasure
> Hid young Desire amid her flowery wreath,
> And pour'd her cup luxuriant; mantling high,
> The sparkling heavenly vintage, Love and Bliss!

Clarinda, when a poet and poetess of Nature's making, two of Nature's noblest productions! when they drink together of the same cup of Love and Bliss——attempt not, ye coarser stuff of human nature, profanely to measure enjoyment ye never can know!

Good night, my dear Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

No. 18.

'I AM distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan!" I have suffered, Clarinda, from your letter. My soul was in arms at the sad perusal: I dreaded that I had acted wrong. If I have robbed you of a friend, God forgive me! But, Clarinda, be comforted: let us raise the tone of our feelings a little higher and bolder. A fellow-creature who leaves us, who spurns us without just cause, though once our bosom friend—up with a little honest pride—let them go! How shall I comfort you, who am the cause of the injury? Can I wish that I had never seen you? that we had never met? No: I never will! But have I

thrown you friendless? there is almost distraction in that thought.

Father of mercies! against thee often have I sinned; through thy grace I will endeavour to do so no more! She who, Thou knowest, is dearer to me than myself, pour Thou the balm of peace into her past wounds, and hedge her about with Thy peculiar care, all her future days and nights! Strengthen her tender noble mind, firmly to suffer, and magnanimously to bear! Make me worthy of that friendship she honours me with. May my attachment to her be pure as devotion, and lasting as immortal life! O Almighty Goodness, hear me! Be to her at all times, particularly in the hour of distress or trial, a Friend and Comforter, a Guide and Guard.

'How are Thy servants blest, O Lord,
How sure is their defence!
Eternal Wisdom is their guide,
Their help, Omnipotence!'

Forgive me, Clarinda, the injury I have done you! To-night I shall be with you; as indeed I shall be ill at ease till I see you.

SYLVANDER.

No. 19.

Two o'clock.

I JUST now received your first letter of yesterday, by the careless negligence of the penny post. Clarinda, matters are grown very serious

with us: then seriously hear me, and hear me heaven—I met you, my dear * * * * * by far the first of woman kind, at least to me: I esteemed, I loved you at first sight; the longer I am acquainted with you, the more innate amiableness and worth I discover in you.—You have suffered a loss, I confess, for my sake: but if the firmest, steadiest, warmest friendship; if every endeavour to be worthy of *your* friendship; if a love, strong as the ties of nature, and holy as the duties of religion—if all these can make any thing like a compensation for the evil I have occasioned you, if they be worth your acceptance, or can in the least add to your enjoyments——So help Sylvander, ye powers above, in this hour of need, as he freely gives these all to Clarinda!

I esteem you, I love you, as a friend; I admire you, I love you, as a woman, beyond any one in all the circle of creation; I know I shall continue to esteem you, to love you, to pray for you, nay, to pray for *myself* for *your* sake.

Expect me at eight———And believe me to be ever, my dearest Madam, yours most entirely,

SYLVANDER.

No. 20.

WHEN matters, my love, are desperate, we must put on a desperate face——

——'On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.'

Or, as the same author finely says, in another place:——

——'Let thy soul spring up,
And lay strong hold for help on him that made thee.'

I am yours, Clarinda, for life. Never be discouraged at all this. Look forward; in a few weeks I shall be somewhere or other out of the possibility of seeing you: till then, I shall write you often, but visit you seldom. Your fame, your welfare, your happiness, are dearer to me than any gratification whatever. Be comforted, my love! the present moment is the worst; the lenient hand of Time is daily and hourly either lightening the burden, or making us insensible to the weight. None of these friends, I mean Mr. —— and the other gentlemen, can hurt your worldly support: and for their friendship, in a little time you will learn to be easy, and, [illegible]

No. 21.

Glasgow, Monday Evening, 9 o'clock.

THE attraction of love, I find, is in an inverse proportion to the attraction of the Newtonian Philosophy: in the system of Sir Isaac, the nearer objects are to one another, the stronger is the attractive force; in my system, every milestone that marked my progress from Clarinda, awakened a keener pang of attachment to her. How do you feel, my love? is your heart ill at ease? I fear it.—God forbid, that these persecutors should harass that peace which is more precious to me than my own. Be assured, I shall ever think of you, muse on you, and, in my moments of devotion, pray for you. The hour that you are not in all my thoughts—'be that hour darkness! let the shadows of death cover it! let it not be numbered in the hours of the day!'

——'When I forget the darling theme,
Be my tongue mute! my fancy paint no more!
And, dead to joy, forget my heart to beat!'

I have just met with my old friend, the ship captain; guess my pleasure: to meet you could alone have given me more. My brother William, too, the young saddler, has come to Glasgow to meet me; and here are we three spending the evening.

I arrived here too late to write by post; but I'll wrap half a dozen sheets of blank paper together, and send it by the Fly, under the name of a par-

cel. You shall hear from me next post town. I would write you a long letter, but for the present circumstance of my friend.

Adieu, my Clarinda! I am just going to propose your health, by way of grace-drink.

SYLVANDER.

No. 22.

Cumnock, 2d March, 1788.

I HOPE, and am certain, that my generous Clarinda will not think my silence, for now a long week, has been in any degree owing to my forgetfulness. I have been tost about through the country ever since I wrote you; and am here returning from Dumfries-shire, at an inn, the post-office of the place, with just so long time as my horse eats his corn, to write you. I have been hurried with business and dissipation almost equal to the insidious degree of the Persian monarch's mandate, when he forbade asking petition of God or man for forty days: had the venerable prophet been as throng as I, he had not broken the decree; at least, not thrice a day.

I am thinking my farming scheme will yet hold. A worthy intelligent farmer, my father's friend and my own, has been with me on the spot: he thinks the bargain practicable. I am myself, on a more serious review of the lands, much better pleased with them. I won't mention this in writing to any body but you and ——. Don't accuse me of being fickle: I have the two

plans of life before me, and I wish to adopt the one most likely to procure me independence. I shall be in Edinburgh next week. I long to see you: your image is omnipresent to me: nay, I am convinced I would soon idolatrize it most seriously; so much do absence and memory improve the medium through which one sees the much-loved object. To-night, at the sacred hour of eight, I expect to meet you—at the Throne of Grace. I hope, as I go home to-night, to find a letter from you at the post-office, in Mauchline. I have just once seen that dear hand since I left Edinburgh; a letter indeed which much affected me. Tell me, first of womankind! will my warmest attachment, my sincerest friendship, my correspondence, will they be any compensation for the sacrifices you make for my sake? If they will, they are yours. If I settle on the farm I propose, I am just a day and a half's ride from Edinburgh. We will meet, don't you say, 'perhaps too often!'

Farewell, my fair, my charming poetess! May all good things ever attend you! I am ever,

My dearest Madam, Yours,

SYLVANDER.

No. 23.

Mossgiel, 7th. March, 1788.

CLARINDA, I have been so stung with your reproach for unkindness, a sin so unlike me, a sin I detest more than a breach of the

whole Decalogue, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth articles excepted, that I believe I shall not rest in my grave about it, if I die before I see you. You have often allowed me the head to judge, and the heart to feel, the influence of female excellence: was it not blasphemy then, against your own charms, and against my feelings, to suppose that a short fortnight could abate my passion! You, my Love, may have your cares and anxieties to disturb you, but they are the usual recurrences of life; your future views are fixed, and your mind in a settled routine. Could not you, my ever dearest Madam, make a little allowance for a man, after long absence, paying a short visit to a country full of friends, relations, and early intimates? Cannot you guess, my Clarinda, what thoughts, what cares, what anxious forebodings, hopes and fears, must crowd the breast of the man of keen sensibility, when no less is on the tapis than his aim, his employment, his very existence, through future life?

Now that, not my apology, but my defence is made, I feel my soul respire more easily. I know you will go along with me in my justification—would to heaven you could in my adoption too! I mean an adoption beneath the stars—an adoption where I might revel in the immediate beams of

'She, the bright sun of all her sex."

I would not have you, my dear Madam, so much hurt at Miss ———'s coldness. 'Tis placing yourself below her, an honour she by no means deserves. We ought, when we wish to be econo-

mists in happiness; we ought, in the first place, to fix the standard of our own character; and when, on full examination, we know where we stand, and how much ground we occupy, let us contend for it as property; and those who seem to doubt, or deny us what is justly ours, let us either pity their prejudices, or despise their judgment. I know, my dear, you will say this is self-conceit; but I call it self-knowledge: the one is the overweening opinion of a fool, who fancies himself to be, what he wishes himself to be thought: the other is the honest justice that a man of sense, who has thoroughly examined the subject, owes to himself. Without this standard, this column in our own mind, we are perpetually at the mercy of the petulance, the mistakes, the prejudices, nay, the very weakness and wickedness of our fellow-creatures.

I urge this, my dear, both to confirm myself in the doctrine, which, I assure you, I sometimes need; and because I know that this causes you often much disquiet.—To return to Miss ———: she is most certainly a most worthy soul, and equalled by very, very few, in goodness of heart. But, can she boast more goodness of heart than Clarinda? not even prejudice will dare to say so; for penetration and discernment, Clarinda sees far beyond her: to wit, Miss ——— dare make no pretence; to Clarinda's wit, scarce any of her sex dare make pretence: personal charms, it would be ridiculous to run the parallel: and for conduct in life, Miss ——— was never called out, either much to do, or to suffer; Clarinda has been both;

and has performed her part, where Miss ——— would have sunk at the bare idea.

Away, then, with these disquietudes! Let us pray with the honest weaver of Kilbarchan,—'Lord, send us a gude conceit o' oursel!' Or in the words of the auld sang:

> 'Who does me disdain, I can scorn them again,
> And I'll never mind any such foes.'

There is an error in the commerce of intimacy * * * * * * * * * * * * * * way of exchange, have not an equivalent to give us; and what is still worse, have no idea of the value of our goods. Happy is our lot indeed, when we meet with an honest merchant, who is qualified to deal with us on our own terms; but that is a rarity: with almost every body we must pocket our pearls, less or more; and learn, in the old Scotch phrase—'To gie sic like as we get.' For this reason one should try to erect a kind of bank or store-house in one's own mind; or, as the Psalmist says, 'We should commune with our own hearts, and be still.' This is exactly * * * * * * * * * * * *

No. 24.

I OWN myself guilty, Clarinda; I should have written you last week: but when you recollect, my dearest Madam, that yours of this night's

post is only the third I have got from you, and that this is the fifth or sixth I have sent to you, you will not reproach me with a good grace for unkindness. I have always some kind of idea, not to sit down to write a letter, except I have time and possession of my faculties so as to do some justice to my letter; which at present is rarely my situation. For instance, yesterday I dined at a friend's at some distance; the savage hospitality of this country, spent me the most part of the night over the nauseous potion in the bowl: this day sick—head-ache—low spirits—miserable—fasting, except for a draught of water or small beer: now eight o'clock at night—only able to crawl ten minutes' walk into M—— to wait the post, in the pleasurable hope of hearing from the mistress of my soul.

But, truce with all this! When I sit down to write to you, all is harmony and peace. A hundred times a day do I figure you, before your taper, your book or work laid aside, as I get within the room. How happy have I been! and how little of that scantling portion of time, called the life of man, is sacred to happiness:

I could moralize to-night, like a death's head.

> 'O, what is life, that thoughtless wish of all!
> A drop of honey in a draught of gall.'

Nothing astonishes me more, when a little sickness clogs the wheels of life, than the thoughtless career we run, in the hour of health. 'None saith, where is God, my Maker, that giveth songs in the night: who teacheth us more knowledge

than the beasts of the field, and more understanding than the fowls of the air.'

Give me, my Maker, to remember thee! Give me to act up to the dignity of my nature! Give me to feel 'another's woe;' and continue with me that dear-lov'd friend that feels with mine!

The dignified and dignifying consciousness of an honest man, and the well-grounded trust in approving heaven, are two most substantial *** of happiness.

* * * * * * * * *

SYLVANDER.

No. 25.

BEFORE you ask me why I have not written to you; first let me be informed of you, *how* I shall write you? 'In friendship,' you say; and I have many a time taken up my pen to try an epistle of 'Friendship' to you; but it will not do: 'tis like Jove grasping a pop-gun, after having wielded his thunder. When I take up the pen, Recollection ruins me. Ah! my ever dearest Clarinda! Clarinda!—What an host of Memory's tenderest offspring crowd on my fancy at that sound! But I must not indulge that subject: you have forbid it.

I am extremely happy to learn, that your precious health is re-established, and that you are once more fit to enjoy that satisfaction in existence, which health alone can give us. My old friend has indeed been kind to you. Tell him,

that I envy him the power of serving you. I had a letter from him a while ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients, that I could scarce bear to read it, and have not yet answered it. He is a good, honest fellow; and *can* write a friendly letter, which would do equal honour to his head and his heart, as a whole sheaf of his letters I have by me will witness: and though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach *now*, as she did *then*, when he first honoured me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground which I have a right to.

You would laugh, were you to see me where I am just now:—would to heaven you were here to laugh with me! though I am afraid that crying would be our first employment. Here am I set, a solitary hermit, in the solitary room of a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine by me—as grave and as stupid as an owl—but, like that owl, still faithful to my old song; in confirmation of which, my dear Mrs. Mack, here is your good health! may the hand-wal'd benisons o' heaven bless your bonnie face; and the wratch wha skellies at your weelfare, may the auld tinkler deil get him to clout his rotten heart! Amen!

You must know, my dearest Madam, that these now many years, wherever I am, in whatever company, when a married lady is called as a toast, I constantly give you; but, as your name has never passed my lips, even to my most intimate friend, I give you by the name of Mrs.

Mack. This is so well known among my acquaintances, that when my married lady is called for, the toast-master will say—'O, we need not ask him who it is—here's Mrs. Mack!' I have also, among my convivial friends, set on foot a round of toasts, which I call a round of Arcadian Shepherdesses; that is, a round of favourite ladies, under female names celebrated in ancient song; and then, you are my Clarinda: so, my lovely Clarinda, I devote this glass of wine to a most ardent wish for your happiness!

In vain would Prudence, with decorous sneer,
Point out a cens'ring world, and bid me fear:
Above that world on wings of love I rise,
I know its worst—and can that worst despise.
'Wrong'd, injur'd, shunn'd; unpitied, unredrest,
The mock'd quotation of the scorner's jest.'
Let Prudence' direst bodements on me fall,
Clarinda, rich reward! o'erpays them all!

I have been rhyming a little of late, but I do not know if they are worth postage.—Tell me

* * * * * * * * *
* * * * * *

SYLVANDER.

At what period of the Correspondence the following Poem was sent is uncertain.

'I burn, I burn, as when thro' ripen'd corn,
By driving winds the crackling flames are borne!'
Now maddening, wild, I curse that fatal night;
Now bless the hour which charm'd my guilty sight.
In vain the laws their feeble force oppose;
Chain'd at his feet they groan, Love's vanquish'd foes:
In vain Religion meets my shrinking eye;
I dare not combat—but I turn and fly:
Conscience in vain upbraids the unhallow'd fire;
Love grasps his scorpions—stifled they expire:
Reason drops headlong from his sacred throne,
Your dear idea reigns, and reigns alone;
Each thought, intoxicated, homage yields,
And riots wanton in forbidden fields!
By all on high adoring mortals know!
By all the conscious villain fears below!
By your dear self! the last, great oath I swear;
Nor life, nor soul, were ever half so dear!

APPENDIX.

The following Poems and Songs, which have been collected from various sources, will be found a valuable addition to the works of our celebrated Poet.

MY LADY'S GOWN THERE'S GAIRS UPON'T.

CHORUS.

My lady's gown there's gairs upon't,
And gowden flowers sae rare upon't;
But Jenny's jimps and jirkinet,
My lord thinks muckle mair upon't.

MY lord a hunting he is gane,
But hounds or hawks wi' him are nane,
By Colin's cottage lies his game,
If Colin's Jenny be at hame.

My lady's gown, &c.

My lady's white, my lady's red,
And kith and kin o' Cassillis' blude,
But her ten-pund lands o' tocher gude
Were a' the charms his lordship lo'ed.

My lady's gown, &c.

Out o'er yon moor, out o'er yon moss,
Whare gor-cocks thro' the heather pass,
There wons auld Colin's bonnie lass,
A lily in a wilderness.

My lady's gown, &c.

Sae sweetly move her genty limbs,
Like music notes o' lover's hymns:
The diamond dew in her een sae blue,
Where laughing love sae wanton swims,
My lady's gown, &c.

My lady's dink, my lady's drest,
The flower and fancy o' the west;
But the lassie that a man lo'es best,
O that's the lass to make him blest.
My lady's gown, &c.

ROBIN SHURE IN HAIRST.

ROBIN shure in hairst,
I shure wi' him,
Fient a heuk had I,
Yet I stack by him.
I gaed up the Dunse,
To warp a wab o' plaiden,
At his daddie's yett,
Wha met me but Robin.

Was na Robin bauld,
Tho' I was a cotter,
Play'd me sic a trick
And me the eller's dochter?
Robin shure, &c.

Robin promis'd me
A' my winter vittle;
Fient haet he had but three
Goose feathers and a whittle.
Robin shure, &c.

TIBBIE DUNBAR.

Tune—'JOHNNY M'GILL.'

O WILL thou go wi' me, sweet Tibbie Dunbar;
O wilt thou go wi' me, sweet Tibbie Dunbar;
Wilt thou ride on a horse, or be drawn in a car,
Or walk by my side, O sweet Tibbie Dunbar.
I carena thy daddie, his lands and his money,
I carena thy kin, sae high and sae lordly:
But say thou wilt hae mè for better for waur,
And come in thy coatie, sweet Tibbie Dunbar.

O GUDE ALE COMES.

O GUDE ale comes, and gude ale goes,
Gude ale gars me sell my hose,
Sell my hose, and pawn my shoon,
Gude ale keeps my heart aboon.
I had sax owsen in a pleugh,
They drew a' weel enough;
I sell'd them a' just ane by ane,
Gude ale keeps my heart aboon.

Gude ale hauds me bare and busy,
Gars me moop wi' the servant hizzie,
Stand i' the stool when I hae done,
Gude ale keeps my heart aboon.
O gude ale comes, and good ale goes,
Gude ale gars me sell my hose,
Sell my hose, and pawn my shoon,
Gude ale keeps my heart aboon.

O LEAVE NOVELS.

O LEAVE novels, ye Mauchline belles.
Ye're safer at your spinning-wheel;
Such witching books, are baited hooks
For rakish rooks, like Rob Mossgiel.
Your fine Tom Jones and Grandisons,
They make your youthful fancies reel,
They heat your brains, and fire your veins,
And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

Beware a tongue that's smoothly hung;
A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part,
'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.
The frank address, the soft caress,
[illegible]

Then let the sudden bursting sigh
  The heart-felt pang discover;
And in the keen, yet tender eye,
  O read th' imploring lover.
For well I know thy gentle mind
  Disdains art's gay disguising;
Beyond what fancy e'er refin'd
  The voice of nature prizing.

O AY MY WIFE SHE DANG ME.

CHORUS.

O ay my wife she dang me,
An' aft my wife she bang'd me;
If ye gie a woman a' her will,
Gude faith she'll soon o'ergang ye.

ON peace and rest my mind was bent,
  And fool I was I marry'd;
But never honest man's intent
  As cursedly miscarry'd.
O ay my wife, &c.

Some sairie comfort still at last,
  When a' thir days are done, man,
My pains o' hell on earth is past,
  I'm sure o' bliss aboon, man.
O ay my wife, &c.

HERE'S TO THY HEALTH, MY BONNIE LASS.

HERE'S to thy health, my bonnie lass,
Gudenight and joy be wi' thee:
I'll come nae mair to thy bower door,
To tell thee that I lo'e thee.
O dinna think, my pretty pink,
But I can live without thee:
I vow and swear I dinna care
How lang ye look about ye.

Thou'rt ay sae free informing me,
Thou hast nae mind to marry,
I'll be as free informing thee,
Nae time I hae to tarry.
I ken thy friends try ilka means
Frae wedlock to delay thee

But at twel at night, when the moon shines bright,
My dear, I'll come and see thee;
For the man that loves his mistress weel
Nae travel makes him weary.

EPISTLE TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE HIGHLAND SOCIETY,

RESPECTING FIVE HUNDRED HIGHLANDERS ATTEMPTING TO EMIGRATE TO AMERICA.

To the Right Hon. the Earl of B * * *, President of the Right Honourable and Honourable the Highland Society, which met on the 23d of May last, at the Shakespeare, Covent-Garden, to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of* FIVE HUNDRED HIGHLANDERS *who, as the Society were informed by Mr. M'—— of A* * * *s, were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters, whose property they are, by emigrating from the lands of Mr. Macdonald of Glengary to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing—*LIBERTY.

LONG life, my Lord, an' health be yours,
Unskaith'd by hunger'd Highlan' boors!
Lord grant nae duddie, desperate beggar,
Wi' durk, claymore, or rusty trigger,
May twin auld Scotland o' a life
She likes—as *butchers* like a *knife!*

Faith, you and A****s were right
To keep the Highlan' hounds in sight!
I doubt na! they wad bid na better
Than let them ance out owre the water;

Then up amang the lakes and seas
They'll mak what rules an' laws they please.
Some daring Hancocke, or a Franklin,
May set their Highlan' bluid a-ranklin;
Some Washington again may head them,
Or some Montgomery, fearless, lead them;
Till God knows what may be effected,
When by such heads an' hearts directed:
Poor dunghill sons of dirt and mire,
May to Patrician rights aspire!
Nae sage North, now, nor sager Sackville,
To watch an' premier owre the pack vile!
An' whare will ye get Howes and Clintons
To bring them to a right repentance?
To cowe the rebel generation,
An' save the *honour* o' the nation!

They, an' be d——d! what right hae they
To meat, or sleep, or light o'day?
Far less to riches, pow'r, or freedom,
But what your Lordships please to gie them!

But hear, my Lord! G**** hear!
Your *hand's owre light on them*, I fear;
Your factors, grieves, trustees, an' bailies,
I canna say but they do gailies;
They lay aside a' tender mercies,
An' tirl the hallions to the birsies;
Yet, while they're only poin'd and herriet,
They'll keep their stubborn Highlan' spirit:
But smash them! crash them a' to spails!
An' rot the dyvors i' the jails!
The young dogs, swinge them to the labour,
Let wark an' hunger make them sober!

The hizzies, if their oughtlins faussont,
Let them in Drury Lane be lesson'd!
An' if the wives, an' dirty brats
Come thiggan at your doors an' yetts,
Flaffan wi' duds, and grey wi' beese,
Frightan awa' your deucks and geese;
Get out a horse-whip, or a jowler,
The langest thong, the fiercest growler,
And gar the tatter'd gipsies pack
Wi' a' their bastards on their back!

Go on, my Lord! I lang to meet you,
An' in my *house at hame* to greet you!
Wi' common lords ye shanna mingle,
The benmost neuk beside the ingle,
At my right hand assign'd your seat,
'Tween Herod's hip an' Polycrate,—
Or, if ye on your station tarrow,
Between Almagro an' Pizarro;
A seat, I'm sure you're weel deservin't;
An' till ye come—your humble servant,

BEELZEBUB.

June 1, *Anno Mundi* 5790.

ORIGINAL LETTER AND POEM.

(No date, but supposed November or December, 1787.*)*

SIR;

THE inclosed poem was written in consequence of your suggestion, last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. It cost me an hour or two

of next morning's sleep, but did not please me; so it lay by, an ill-digested effort, till the other day that I gave it a critic brush. These kind of subjects are much hackneyed; and, besides the wailings of the rhyming tribe over the ashes of the great, are cursedly suspicious, and out of all character for sincerity. These ideas damped my Muse's fire; however, I have done the best I could, and, at all events, it gives me an opportunity of declaring that I have the honour to be, Sir, your much obliged humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

Monday Morning.

To Charles Hay, Esq. Advocate.

ON THE DEATH OF THE LATE LORD PRESIDENT.

LONE on the bleaky hills the straying flocks
Shun the fierce storms among the sheltering rocks;
Down foam the rivulets, red with dashing rains;
The gathering floods burst o'er the distant plains:
Beneath the blast the leafless forests groan;
The hollow caves return a sullen moan.
Ye hills, ye plains, ye forests, and ye caves,
Ye howling winds and wintry-swelling waves;
Unheard, unseen, by human ear or eye,
Sad to your sympathetic glooms I fly,
Where, to the whistling blast, and waters' roar,
Pale Scotia's recent wound I may deplore.

O heavy loss thy country ill could bear!
A loss these evil days can ne'er repair!

Justice, the high vicegerent of her God,
Her doubtful balance ey'd and sway'd her rod;
She heard the tidings of the fatal blow,
And sunk abandon'd to the wildest woe.

Wrongs, injuries, from many a darksome den,
Now gay in hope explore the paths of men.
See, from his cavern, grim Oppression rise,
And throw on Poverty his cruel eyes;
Keen on the helpless victim see him fly,
And stifle, dark, the feebly-bursting cry:
Mark ruffian Violence, distain'd with crimes,
Rousing elate in these degenerate times:
View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,
As guileful Fraud points out the erring way;
While subtle Litigation's pliant tongue
The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong:
Hark, injur'd Want recounts th' unlisten'd tale,
And much-wrong'd Misery pours th' unpity'd wail!

Ye dark waste hills, and brown unsightly plains,
Inspire and sooth my melancholy strains!
Ye tempests rage! ye turbid torrents roll!
Ye suit the joyless tenor of my soul:
Life's social haunts and pleasures I resign;
Be nameless wilds and lonely wanderings mine,
To mourn the woes my country must endure,
That wound degenerate ages cannot cure.

LETTER TO MR. M——R. KILMARNOCK.

Mosgiel, 7th March, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE partly changed my ideas, my dear friend, since I saw you. I took old Glenconner with me to Mr. Miller's farm, and he was so pleased with it, that I have written an offer to Mr. Miller, which, if he accepts, I shall sit down a plain farmer, the happiest of lives when a man can live by it. In this case I shall not stay in Edinburgh above a week. I set out on Monday, and would have come by Kilmarnock, but there are several small sums owing me for my first edition, about Galston and Newmills; and I shall set off so early as to dispatch my business, and reach Glasgow by night. When I return, I shall devote a forenoon or two to make some kind of acknowledgment for all the kindness I owe your friendship. Now that I hope to settle with some credit and comfort at home, there was not any friendship or friendly correspondence, that promised me more pleasure than yours; I hope I will not be disappointed. I trust the spring will renew your shattered frame, and make your friends happy. You and I have often agreed that life is no great blessing on the whole. The close of life, indeed, to a reasoning eye, is,

'Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams
Athwart the gloom profound'——

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broken machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley,—be it so; at least, there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants; if that part of us called Mind, does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with old-wife prejudices and tales! Every age and every nation, has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence they have often, perhaps always, been deceived: a man, conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow creatures; even granting that he may have been the sport, at times, of passions and instincts; he goes to a great unknown Being, who could have no other end in giving him existence but to make him happy; who gave him those passions and instincts, and well knows their force.

These, my worthy friend, are my ideas! and I know they are not far different from yours. It becomes a man of sense to think for himself; particularly in a case where all men are equally interested, and where, indeed, all men are equally in the dark.

Adieu, my dear Sir! God send us a cheerful meeting!

ROBERT BURNS.

ILLUSTRATIVE DESCRIPTION

OF THE

ENGRAVINGS.

KIRK ALLOWAY

Lies within a few yards of the road that leads from Ayr to Carrick. It is a place of great antiquity, but has been gradually decaying, since the union of the parish of Alloway to that of Ayr, a circumstance which took place above a century ago. The former parish is considered as one of the oldest in Scotland; and, though the consequence of its union with Ayr is the near dissolution of its venerable kirk, still the inhabitants retain some peculiar privileges, which abundantly testify its ancient importance. Burns has rendered the church famous by his tale of *Tam o' Shanter*. It appears to be, by the concurrent testimony of the country, a place notorious for the nocturnal revels of witches and fairies; and the poet, favouring the conceit of his countrymen, has given, in the piece above mentioned, a description of one of their assemblies; and, after representing them in the height of their magical sport, under the presidency of 'Auld Nick,' he adds an inventory of attendant circumstances, that exhibits a mind fertile with images of the most terrific nature.

In the burial ground of Kirk Alloway is interred the remains of William Burness, the father of the poet, and a stone is seen in the left corner of the annexed view, on which is engraved this inscription to his memory:

THIS STONE WAS ERECTED TO THE

MEMORY OF

WILLIAM BURNESS,

LATE FARMER IN LOCHLEE PARISH, OF TARBOLTON,

Who died Feb. 3, 1784, *aged* 63 *Years; and was buried here.*

The wall of the church-yard being nearly destroyed, at the time of his residence in its vicinity, he joined two or three neighbours in an application to the town council of Ayr, for permission to rebuild it, which was granted, and a subscription raised for the purpose; since that time, the inclosed ground was considered the burial place of the family, and Burns himself expressed an intention to rest his bones there, when they should be no longer serviceable to him, but his anticipation was not realized.

The place appropriated for public worship in the church was small, scarcely accommodating three hundred persons; some years ago the roof was standing, and a few seats, and the gallery or loft at the west end, were visible; but nothing now remains except the walls. It is worthy of notice, that, notwithstanding the decay of the kirk, the bell retains its ancient situation, as may be seen in the print, with a remnant of the chain. An attempt to remove it was made by the magistrates a short time since, but the zeal of the peasantry interposed, and the design was abandoned.

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THE RIVER DOON,

About two miles S. W. from the burgh of Ayr, divides Kyle from Carrick. For several miles from its mouth, its banks are beautifully diversified with plantations, well-cultivated fields, and neat villas. Though not fed by so many tributary streams as the Ayr, it pours down a larger quantity of water. During the summer months its channel is always

full. The ruins of Greenan Castle, at a small distance from the mouth of the Doon, on a rock on Carrick shore, have a very striking and picturesque effect.

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LINCLUDEN COLLEGE.

The venerable remains of this college are situated about a mile and a half north-west from Dumfries, on the banks of the Clouden, a tributary stream to the river Nith. The structure, though low, and built with a dull red stone, presents a most beautiful and highly-enriched specimen of the English, or pointed style of Gothic architecture; the windows are ornamented with peculiar richness, and, in the general decoration, no part, interior or exterior, has been forgotten.—On viewing this elegant pile, where the most exquisite workmanship is mouldering, obsolete, and almost in oblivion, sensations of the strongest regret are excited. Part of the upper roof of its chancel is yet in existence, though the lower one is entirely demolished; on the wall is a beautiful monument, to the memory of Margaret, daughter of Robert the Third, king of Scotland, and wife to Archibald, earl of Douglas, and duke of Terouan. The sequestered situation of this college, the romantic scenery in its immediate neighbourhood, the gentle murmuring of the Clouden, and the distant roaring of the 'swells and fa's' of the Nith, seem to have inspired the poet with the most sublime ideas.

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THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDIE.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the village of Aberfeldie, in Perthshire, is a deep wooded glen, following the course of a mountain streamlet, which wantons in Nature's

wildest forms, among chasms and excavated rocks. The beauty of the scenery is heightened by the rich and luxuriant foliage of the lofty fir and spreading ash, intermixed with the taper hazel and the drooping birch; which, moving with the gentle gales, breathe responsive murmurs to the sound of innumerable cascades, that rush headlong down, and are collected into two falls of considerable magnitude. The approach to the falls is through a mazy and intricate path, and cannot safely be attempted by strangers without a guide. The frequent windings of the way produce an ever-changing variety of grand and picturesque effect. In many parts the rocks elevate their stupendous bulk in gloomy majesty, emitting from their perforated sides numerous rills, that stray among the entangled roots of trees and shrubs, till they join the rapid current, that winds its foaming course in the rude channel below. The dashing sound of the falls is heard at a distance through the wood, and the mind anticipates with awe the approaching scene. Those unaccustomed to Nature in her wildest dress, are, not without reason, surprised to find the poet Burns making choice of this place for amorous assignations.

At the lower fall, a grand display of water meets the eye, and, looking downward, the rushing of the stream, nearly forty feet below, aided by the savage scenery around, and the united roarings of both the falls, creates a trepidation not easily subdued. The alarm, thus excited, is increased on the way to the upper fall: the ascent is, in many places, steep and slippery; the din of waters becomes more powerful, and anxiety is succeeded by consternation, when, on a sudden turn of the path, the cataract bursts at once upon the sight. The dreadful force of the waters is here seen, and the thundering noise occasioned by their fall precludes the interchange of speech. Bold, jutting rocks present themselves immediately in front, and are completely excavated into an immense cauldron below, where the waters fall, and rise again in continual mist to a considerable height. This interesting scene is adorned with noble trees, and others of smaller growth, that spread their branches to the nutri-

cious and incessant moisture; the ground likewise is embossed with flowers, which imbibe the falling dew. But Nature spreads her sweets in vain, while amazement retains full possession of the faculties, and admiration is lost in wonder and astonishment.

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THE FALLS OF FYERS,

NEAR LOCH NESS.

The country in the vicinity of the river Fyers, before its discharge into Loch Ness, strikes the imagination of the beholder with the gloomy grandeur of the most retired solitude. The ascent to the falls is over rugged precipices, and which, but to gratify the curiosity of the traveller, would scarcely ever be passed. An elegant bridge has been built over the upper fall, at the expence of a Mr. Frazer: the execution of this fabric is highly creditable to the architect.

In order to see these falls to advantage, the bridge must be crossed; and descending a very steep precipice, the view is obtained of the upper fall, which we have engraved: then following a broken foot-path, immediately beyond the bridge, the lower fall presents itself:

> 'Prone down the rock, the whit'ning sheet descends,
> And viewless Echo's ear astonish'd rends.'

The body of water which, after great rains, rushes down these falls, is immense: to form some idea of it, Johnson says, 'endeavour to conceive the effect of a thousand streams, poured from the mountains into one channel, struggling for expansion in a narrower passage, exasperated by rocks rising in their way, and at last discharging all the violence of their waters by a sudden fall through the horrid chasm.'

Loch Ness, into which the river runs, is about twenty-four miles long, and from one to two miles broad; it fills a large hollow between two ridges of high rocks, being supplied partly by the torrents which fall into it on either side,

and partly by springs at the bottom ; its water is remarkably clear and pleasant, and is imagined by the natives to be medicinal : it is said to be in some parts of the almost incredible depth of one hundred and forty fathoms.

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THE HOUSE IN WHICH ROBERT BURNS WAS BORN.

This cottage is situated at a short distance from Ayr, near to Kirk Alloway, and has nothing remarkable to recommend it, unless considered of consequence, on account of its being the birth-place of such an eminent poet.

The house was built by William Burness, the father of Robert, shortly after whose birth, one end of it fell down, which occasioned an alarm, easier conceived than described. This house consisted of a kitchen at one extremity, and at the other was a room, dignified with the luxury of a fire-place and chimney ; things not usual, at that time, in the cottages of the peasantry of Scotland. William Burness also constructed, in the kitchen, a concealed bed, with a small closet at the end, of the same materials with the house, and being altogether cast over both outside and inside with mortar, it had a neat and comfortable appearance.

The person who occupies it at present has turned it into a snug public-house ; at this house, yearly, on the birth-day of Burns, a social party meet, and celebrate it with festivity and rejoicing ; scarcely a traveller passes who does not there pay a tribute to the memory of the poet ; and the possessor has contrived that none shall pass without knowing who once inhabited it, by placing the following inscription near the door :—

' Halt, passenger, and read :

This is the humble cottage, that gave birth to the celebrated poet,

ROBERT BURNS.'

MAUSOLEUM OF BURNS,

AT DUMFRIES.

THIS elegant and classical Monument is now nearly finished, and can scarcely be surpassed by any sepulchral erection. The interior is adorned by ornaments in *alto* relievo, and represents the apotheosis of the deceased bard. The genius of Scotland finds Burns, as the prophetic bard Elijah found Elisha, at the plough, and is throwing his inspiring mantle over him. The foundation stone was laid on the 5th of June, 1815, with due masonic formalities; and the building has been carried forward with a spirit highly honourable to the age and country.

ON THE DEATH OF BURNS.

BY MR. ROSCOE.

REAR high thy bleak majestic hills,
  Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread;
And, *Scotia*, pour thy thousand rills,
  And wave thy heaths with blossoms red:
But, ah! what poet now shall tread
  Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,
Since he the sweetest bard is dead
  That ever breath'd the soothing strain?

As green thy towering pines may grow,
  As clear thy streams may speed along,
As bright thy summer suns may glow,
  As gaily charm thy feathery throng;
But now, unheeded is thy song,
  And dull and lifeless all around,
For his wild harp lies all unstrung,
  And cold the hand that wak'd its sound.

What though thy vigorous offspring rise,
  In arts and arms thy sons excel;
Tho' beauty in thy daughters' eyes,
  And health in every feature dwell;
Yet who shall now their praises tell,
  In strains impassion'd, fond and free,
Since he no more the song shall swell
  To love, and liberty, and thee.

With step-dame eye and frown severe
  His hapless youth why didst thou view?
For all thy joys to him were dear,
  And all his vows to thee were due:

Nor greater bliss his bosom knew,
In opening youth's delightful prime,
Than when thy favouring ear he drew
To listen to his chanted rhyme.

Thy lonely wastes and frowning skies
To him were all with rapture fraught;
He heard with joy the tempest rise
That wak'd him to sublimer thought;
And oft thy winding dells he sought,
Where wild flow'rs pour'd their rathe perfume;
And with sincere devotion brought
To thee the summer's earliest bloom.

But, ah! no fond maternal smile
His unprotected youth enjoy'd;
His limbs inur'd to early toil,
His days with early hardships tried;
And more to mark the gloomy void,
And bid him feel his misery,
Before his infant eyes would glide
Day-dreams of immortality.

Yet, not by cold neglect depressed,
With sinewy arm he turn'd the soil,
Sunk with the evening sun to rest,
And met at morn his earliest smile.
Wak'd by his rustic pipe, meanwhile
The powers of Fancy came along,
And sooth'd his lengthen'd hours of toil
With native wit and sprightly song.

Ah! days of bliss, too swiftly fled,
When vigorous Health from labour springs,
And bland Contentment smooths the bed,
And Sleep his ready opiate brings:
And hovering round on airy wings
Float the light forms of young Desire,
That of unutterable things
The soft and shadowy hope inspire.

Now spells of mightier power prepare,
  Bid brighter phantoms round him dance;
Let Flatt'ry spread her viewless snare,
  And Fame attract his vagrant glance;
Let sprightly Pleasure too advance,
  Unveil'd her eyes, unclasp'd her zone,
Till lost in Love's delirious trance,
  He scorn the joys his youth has known.

Let Friendship pour her brightest blaze,
  Expanding all the bloom of soul;
And Mirth concentre all her rays,
  And point them from the sparkling bowl;
And let the careless moments roll
  In social pleasures unconfined,
And Confidence that spurns control
  Unlock the inmost springs of mind:

And lead his steps those bowers among,
  Where elegance with splendour vies,
Or Science bids her favour'd throng
  To more refin'd sensations rise:
Beyond the peasant's humbler joys,
  And freed from each laborious strife,
There let him learn the bliss to prize
  That waits the sons of polish'd life.

Then, whilst his throbbing veins beat high
  With every impulse of delight,
Dash from his lips the cup of joy,
  And shroud this scene in shades of night;
And let Despair, with wizard light,
  Disclose the yawning gulph below,
And pour incessant on his sight
  Her specter'd ills and shapes of woe.

And shew beneath a cheerless shed,
  With sorrowing heart and streaming eye,
In silent grief where droops her head,
  The partner of his early joys;

And let his infant's tender cries
  His fond parental succour claim,
And bid him hear in agonies
  A husband's and a father's name.

'Tis done, the powerful charm succeeds;
  His high reluctant spirit bends,
In bitterness of soul he bleeds,
  Nor longer with his fate contends.
An idiot laugh the welkin rends
  As genius thus degraded lies;
Till pitying Heaven the veil extends
  That shrouds the poet's ardent eyes.

—Rear high thy bleak majestic hills,
  Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread;
And, *Scotia*, pour thy thousand rills,
  And wave thy heaths with blossoms red.
But never more shall poet tread
  Thy airy height, thy woodland reign,

A MONODY

ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BURNS.

WRITTEN BY S. KEMBLE, ESQ.

For two Voices.—Tune, Gaffer Gray.

AH! what is there ill news, speak old
Robin Gray,
That thy blue bonnet's pluck'd o'er thy brow?
O! sad news I've read,
Robie Burns, man, is dead,
And the ploughman weeps over his plough,
Well, a well a day,
And the ploughman weeps over his plough.

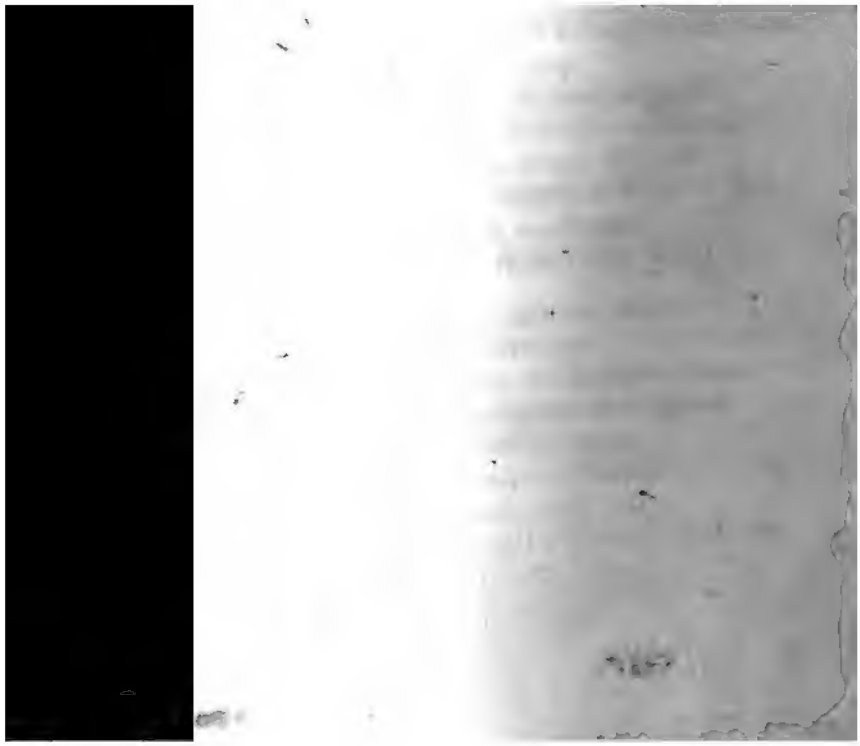
Is he gone then for aye, and for aye,
Robin Gray?
No more shall we list to his song?
No, cold as a clod,
Beneath a green sod,
Poor Robin they've lain all along,
Well, a well a day,
Poor Robin they've lain all along.

Adieu then, the forest and hill,
Robin Gray,
And farewell the valleys and grove!
Why the forest and hill,
And the valleys ring still,
Still echo his ditties of love,
Well, a well a day,
Still echo his ditties of love.

The sad sound of echo I'll shun,
Robin Gray,
Its dying notes live on my mind:
Can you then, as you roam
From your forefathers' home,
Leave your forefathers' feelings behind,
Well, a well a day,
Leave your forefathers' feelings behind.

Still the blackbird will sing on the thorn,
Robin Gray,
And the lark early carol on high,
But the lowly lodg'd swain,
As he scatters the grain,
Will chaunt Robin's verse with a sigh,
Well, a well a day,
Will chaunt Robin's verse with a sigh.

Softly lie on his bosom the turf,
Robin Gray,
Rest his ashes unmingled and pure;
May the tomb of his urn
Caledonia adorn,
And his much-lov'd remains so secure,
Well, a well a day,
And his much-lov'd remains so secure.

FINIS.

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